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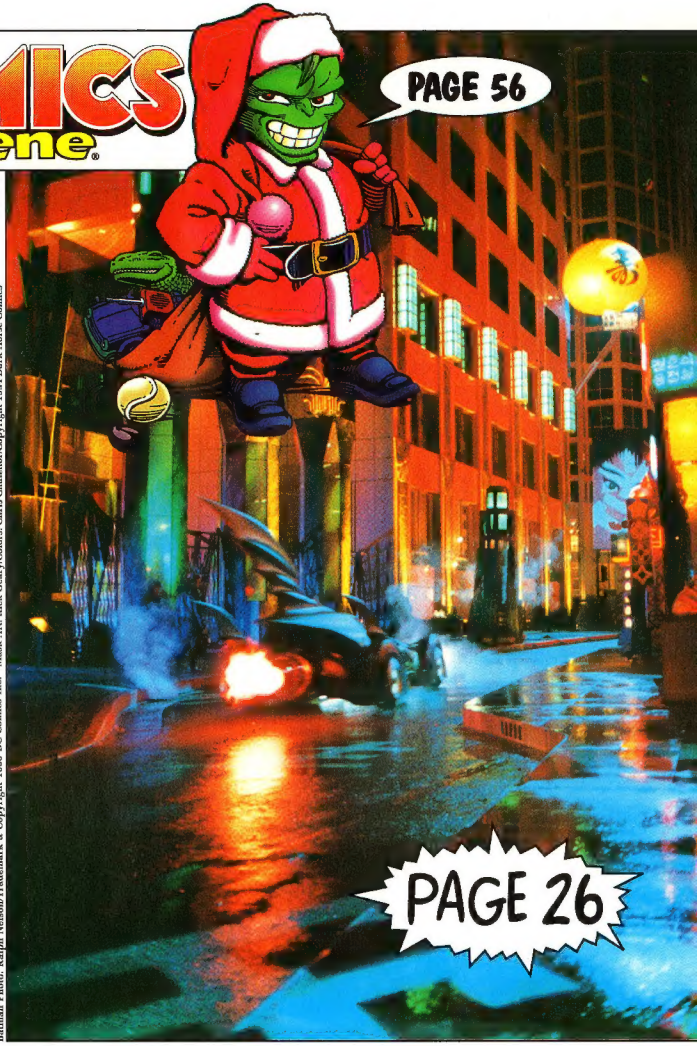

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A World of Word Balloons

Here we are at #50, the first (apparently) successful (enough) newsstand magazine about comics and their creators. COMICS SCENE is still around after an initial run (1981-83), a one-shot revival (1987) and ongoing status (at varying frequencies, 1988-present).

My own involvement began before COMICS SCENE was actually ever published, selling to its premiere editorial team (Howard Zimmerman, Bob Greenberger) as a freelance writer. My interview with Bob Layton (published in the original CS#3) led to further assignments and Howard hiring me as STARLOG's Managing Editor. Alas, that first COMICS SCENE lasted only 11 issues. Years later, I was able to "repay" the magazine for the breaks it offered me by spearheading this revival.

To celebrate this 50th anniversary, we asked 50 comics creators for their thoughts on the future of comics (page 12). Our thanks to them for their insights and their presence this issue—since a number of them (Stan Lee, Roy Thomas, Archie Goodwin, Jean Giraud, Frank Miller, Chris Claremont, Mike Grell and original CS contributor-turned-pro Peter David) as well as Mike Baron and Christopher Reeve (represented in articles this issue) were all part of that 1987 one-shot, the "every-interview-herein-could-be-the-cover-story" extravaganza that jump-started the revival. Hey, we *really* owe you guys.

Also, we really owe publisher Norm Jacobs for sticking with COMICS SCENE forever, publishers Rita Eisenstein and Milburn Smith, circulation guru Art Schulkin, creative director Bill Mohalley (who designs the covers), all our interns and support staffers.

Many designers have worked on this magazine, but only one has given it his soul for 50 issues—and that's comics fan Jim McLernon. Thank you, Jim. And a tip of the cap to all the other designers past and present.

Thanks also to all the legions of interviewees, the helpful marketeers (especially Jeff Walker, Terry Erdmann, Howard Green, Steve Saffel, Marty Stever, Gary Guzzo and Tom Mason) and of course, our many contributors led by comics historian Will Murray, the ultra-prolific Kim Howard Johnson, animation ace Bob Miller and amazing consultant Jean-Marc Lofficier.

Over 50 isues (actually 61) as well as three COMICS SCENE YEARBOOKs and seven COMICS SCENE SPECTACULARs, there have been more than a dozen editorial team members. A special nod to past staffers Patrick Daniel O'Neill, Carr D'Angelo (now at Universal Pictures, helping develop comics-based movies), Dan Dickholtz, J. Peter Orr and Mike Benson (who soloed on the last two CS SPECTACULARs). And a salute to current Managing Editors Marc Bernardin and Mike Stewart, Contributing Editor David Hutchison (on hand since that first CS#1) and FANGORIA's Tony Timpone and Mike Gingold.

Which brings me to the other special aspect of this 50th issue. To celebrate in style, I invited six colleagues from COMICS SCENE's past to return and offer a few word balloons of their own. A heartfelt thanks—not only for their words, but their key creative contributions to COMICS SCENE—to Howard Zimmerman, Bob Greenberger, Eddie Berganza, Mike McAvennie, Lia Pelosi and Maureen McTigue. Their thoughts follow.

And finally, applause from *all* of us at COMICS SCENE past and present, individually mentioned and not, to you readers for being part of this magazine since (remarkably) 1981. Thanks, as always, for your support.

—David McDonnell/Editor

Comics' Brave New World

When I first proposed to Norm Jacobs a sister magazine to STARLOG about comics and comics art, the industry was essentially the same as it had been for the past 30 years. A decade and a half later, it is radically, permanently changed. Not surprisingly, the changes have been driven by technology and economics.

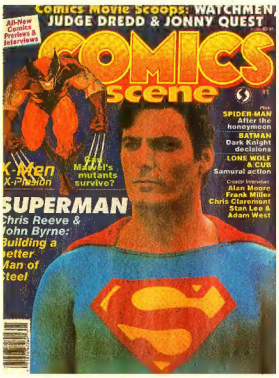
As we entered the 1980s: *Marvel and DC ruled the roost.*

Today there are more than 100 new publishers, from small, locally distributed independents to Dark Horse, Valiant and Image. Last year, Bongo Comics. This year, Tekno•Comix, courtesy of the folks who founded the Sci-Fi Channel. Next up is Broadway Comics, from the same folks who gave you *Saturday Night Live*. DC's parent company is now the giant media conglomerate Time-Warner, and Marvel is part of the vast international empire of billionaire Ron Perelman.

Ninety-plus percent of all comics were sold at newsstands and candy stores.

Today, newsstands and candy stores are endangered species. Ninety-plus percent of all comics are sold at comics shops and through subscriptions. This provides comics readers with the opportunity to buy every single title available each and every month…*if* they are independently wealthy.

All comics displayed the Comics Code Authority stamp of approval.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Comics Scoops! SPIDER-MAN, PHANTOM & SWAMP THING
COMICS scene
Behind the scenes:
WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT?
Alan Moore's farewell to superheroes
Preview: Disney's future cartoons

All except for the "undergrounds" which, by the early '80s, were few and far between. Now, comics with the CCA stamps on them are as rare as hen's teeth—except for Harvey and Archie, which never needed them in the first place. Instead, we have whole racks, whole sections in comics shops devoted to titles for "adult" or "mature" readers as the majority of the comics audience gets older.

All comics artists and writers signed work-for-hire contracts.

Many artists had trouble getting their original art back. None got royalties. Today, an artist has his or her *agent* look over the contract and negotiate a percentage of the cover price as a royalty—none of that net-sales crap. Art is always returned, except for the rare, unscrupulous publisher. Page rates have more than quadrupled for top-rank artists.

There was no national direct distribution network.

Now national suppliers like Diamond and Capital funnel 1,000 to 1,500 titles a month directly into the thousands of comics shops across the country and around the world. Even more important than providing comics readers with easy access to an enormous variety of titles, direct distribution means that *anyone* can get a comic book published if the samples they provide the distributors get a positive response. So if you have a quirky little black-and-white title like *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* or *Bone*, you can get it published in a small market, gradually go for wider distribution and see if you can build a following.

There were no cover enhancements, special limited editions or bound-in trading cards. There were no painted comics or painted covers, no electronic coloring effects or separation techniques, no holograms.

There were no creator-owned properties.

Monthly titles were not a collection of self-contained mini-series.

Oh, and did I mention that the cover price for a 32-page comic had just been raised to 50 cents?

When I was a kid, and I know that I'm dating myself, I took a dollar to the candy store and got eight comics and four cents change. Today, a dollar will not buy you *one* new title. The expense of printing comics has driven cover prices through the roof.

So what have we got today, in the brave new world of comics? Most significantly, I think, a better deal for the talent that creates them. But not, I think, a better deal for the reader. The people making many of the important decisions in the field today are *not* the artists or the writers. Or the editors. Decisions are made today by the marketing people. The accountants. The people in merchandising. The folks cutting the movie and action-figure deals. They often decide which titles live, which ones die, and which will never see the light of day. Given the new corporate nature of comics, this is understandable. Comics are big business now. The billion-dollar success of the *Turtles* has opened everyone's eyes. The stakes are high. Everyone has their eyes on the prize. But their gaze isn't raised—it's lowered to the bottom line.

Comics readers are beleaguered by spiraling cover prices, companies that flood the market with mediocre product in an attempt to drive out competition, and a rush to capitalize on nascent but immature talent that too often gallops into the drawing-for-dollars sweepstakes with half-baked ideas and mediocre execution. The silver lining is that many comics shops and super-stores do carry a variety of low-distribution, creator-owned titles. My advice to comics buyers is this: Be fussy shoppers. Demand titles that speak to you. Seek them out. Support them. Collect the comics you really want to read, rather than those that are being touted as good investments. Your satisfaction will increase, and your collection will be more meaningful to you in the years ahead.

—*Howard Zimmerman*

Howard Zimmerman, then-Editor of STARLOG, served as Editor-In-Chief of the first run of COMICS SCENE (Volume #1, issues #1-11, 1981-83). Now as part of Byron Preiss Visual Publications, he is the Editor of Ray Bradbury Comics *and* The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy *as well as the upcoming* Roger Zelazny's Amber *and* I, Robot *comics series.*

Days of Thrills & Adventure

There's always a thrill in starting something new. I can still recall the excitement rising in the STARLOG PRESS halls as Howard Zimmerman and I rapidly exchanged ideas on what could go in the very first newsstand magazine devoted to comics, comic strips and animation. Then-publisher Kerry O'Quinn's entrepreneurial spirits were inflamed and he encouraged us to think fast, be graphic and get started. As we gushed like a trio of fanboys, publisher Norman Jacobs was busy trying to turn enthusiasm into practical business terms so our newsstand distributor could be infected by the promise of COMICS SCENE.

One morning, Norman strolled into the office and in typical publisher fashion, gruffly said, "They don't see

what you can talk about after the first issue." In equally typical fashion, I whipped out three pages of single-spaced topics and suggestions.

That must have convinced somebody because here we are, celebrating quite a milestone. Many other magazines have made the attempt to go newsstand but almost all of them have fallen to the wayside. Those that are left lack the heritage of being first or the ability to provide the best breadth and depth.

The industry has certainly changed since we celebrated Marvel's 20th anniversary on our very first cover of the original COMICS SCENE (1981). Many of the key players around the business have changed and a legion of companies have risen and fallen during those times (not to count the number of new universes that have died stillborn or old universes which have been dusted off). Creators are enjoying better wages and deals than ever before which has been the impetus behind many getting into the business and unleashing fresh ideas upon us all (personally, things like *Strangers in Paradise* and *Bone* are so delightful).

Of course, the process of creation and re-creation has been something COMICS SCENE has managed to chronicle for more than a decade now. Starting with Howard and myself, and ably followed by all the other successors joining in this celebration, we've been able to report on the growth and evolution of the industry while trying to spotlight the key players and companies. The magazine also transformed itself, literally coming back from the dead and thriving better than I could have ever hoped.

Although I've been at DC Comics for 11 years now, I remain a comics fan and reader. I can still get excited by the debut of a new artist or a terrific spin on a character whether the comic carries our bullet or not. I still buy comics and have a basement getting a little too full with them. Early on in these pages, I championed and applauded the variety inherent in comics and tried to encourage people to look *beyond* the spandex-and-mutant crowd. It's nice to know people may have taken that advice because we certainly have a great deal of variety from *Cherry Poptart* to *Cerebus* to *Cheryl Blossom*.

I also take a lot of pride in helping to spot talent and develop it either as writers for this magazine or in those we've covered. From the former category, there's Eddie Berganza who started as a high school intern and now works beside me at DC as an Associate Editor or cartoonist Brian Pearce who started off doing letter column illustrations and now designs many publications for us (hmmmm, maybe I should be getting a finder's fee).

There were also articles done for us by several freelance writers who have gone on to greater success in the business such as Kim Howard Johnson and my successor and pal, Dave McDonnell (who probably still hasn't forgiven me for turning a 12-page feature into a 10-paragraph news item).

Another personal aside: Since this magazine debuted, I now have to share portions of my collection with my energetic daughter Katie, who has read every DC Archive and Marvel Masterwork available, and my younger son Robbie, who enjoys the four-color adventures of his favorite Disney characters. There is a certain spark they remind me of as they discover a new title or character.

Comics can remain a thrilling and unique medium. For every Frank Miller or Gerry Conway who leaves comics for movies, animation or television, they always seem to return and relish the freedoms inherent in the form. There's an allure to comic books that allows your mind to wander with the possibility of flying between galaxies or just got lost in the intricate artwork and storytelling by the very best craftsmen in the business. While I regret that many of today's readers have lost any appreciation of the pioneers, their work has been lovingly rediscovered and collected by many different companies, preserving a history long thought to be worthless.

Words and pictures. Each have proven to be eloquent and powerful but blended together, done by the best, they can transport you to new places and stir the soul.

With luck, each new issue of this magazine will encourage you to sample some of those new concepts and then you, too, can join in the journey and have a great deal of fun. After all, comics remain primarily a form of entertainment and when done right, can rival the best prose or filmed diversion out there.

—*Robert Greenberger*

*Robert Greenberger was Editor of the first run of COMICS SCENE (#1-11, 1981-83). Since then, he has edited comics for DC (*Star Trek, Doom Patrol, Spectre, *etc) and now serves as the Manager-Editorial Scheduling.*

But What I Really Want To Do Is Direct…

OK, so this *isn't* what I had in mind when I said I wanted to be in pictures. But now as an Associate Editor at DC, my soundstage consists of panel borders. And it all started with COMICS SCENE.

Or rather I started with COMICS SCENE many, many

years ago—during the magazine's first incarnation, you could call it the COMICS SCENE of Earth II. I began working on the magazine as a high school intern for STARLOG. CS was around issue #3 under the editorship of Howard Zimmerman and Bob Greenberger.

In comparison to today, it was a fun and naive time for comics. It was *before* the dark times of cover enhancements, but for me, as a kid, it was great. I was going to my first comic convention, I was getting to meet some of my favorite artists like George Pérez, Bob Layton, Joe Rubenstein and up-and-comers like Denys Cowan.

Hey, I even got to go to the infamous Marvel fan press meeting where Tom DeFalco showed off the special Spider-Man mirror they were producing, so that you could read the *Spider-Man* comic Marvel was going to print *backwards*. This was just a ruse (some have a lot worse names for it) by Marvel, who believed the comic press would print anything they heard. When I saw the mirror, I thought it was pretty dumb, but, hey, I was just thankful to be there. So, I kept my mouth shut. It was a big brouhaha. But everyone survived. And considering the stunts today that are *for real*, a Spider-Man mirror really isn't all that dumb. Maybe there's a clone mirror wandering Europe.

Well, eventually as worlds live and worlds die, sales dropped on COMICS SCENE and it went bye-bye.

I went to college.

But I stayed with STARLOG, eventually becoming an Assistant Editor when COMICS SCENE returned as a one-shot special in 1987. With the renewed interest in comics, we (Carr D'Angelo, Dan Dickholtz and current Editor Dave McDonnell) wanted to make the new CS more visual for our readers, properly spotlighting the art of new talent Todd McFarlane on *Amazing Spider-Man*. This was a success and we moved on to quarterly status and beyond when the first *Batman* movie premiered and Hollywood became comic-book crazy. For me, it was the best of both worlds as COMICS SCENE became the leading authority on which comic-book heroes would attain movie status. The Comics Screen list became something that many have tried to copy, but no one has ever matched Dave's up-to-the-minute info.

When Carr left, Dan and I went on to share the Managing Editor title. Dan and Dave took care of the copy editing, later Mike McAvennie and Lia Pelosi joined, both having started out like me, as interns. All the while, I secured art for the articles, not as easy a task as you might think, which my current day counterparts can no doubt attest to. And I wouldn't really know why until I was on the other side of the fence. That leap was made with the aid of Bob Greenberger, who had years earlier moved on to DC Comics. He needed help in his department, which acts as editorial support and helps coordinate DC's vast talent pool.

My dilemma was: should I go with Bob? It *wasn't* the movies. That's why I was at STARLOG, hoping to make some movie contacts, right? But the DC offer also had other possibilities. After my loooong service for STARLOG, Dave thought it would be a good move.

And here I am now. In four years, I've gotten to help orchestrate Hal Jordan's "change," leading to the introduction of the new Green Lantern, Kyle Rayner. I've been privy to Peter David's ultimate manicure for Aquaman. And with longtime CS friend Beau Smith, I give *Guy Gardner Warrior* a hassle each month. And guess what? I even got a directing credit on the mini-series *Blood Pack*, that I edited.

So, thanks, Dave, Bob and COMICS SCENE. Happy 50th! I just hope you don't go mad and kill off all the other comics magazines.

—*Eddie Berganza*

Eddie Berganza worked on both incarnations of COMICS SCENE—first as intern, then part-time editorial staffer, finally as Managing Editor (1982-91). He's Associate Editor of DC's Green Lantern *and* Aquaman *as well as Editor of* Guy Gardner Warrior.

Hazardous Hobby

It's a privilege and honor to participate in COMICS SCENE's 50th issue…especially considering that when the magazine first began, very few people associated with the title had figured it would be celebrating such a milestone. And I don't think I'm off-base when I say *no one* could have possibly guessed it would be doing so at a time when the comics scene itself has been having its share of ups and downs.

In many ways, my two-year stint as a Managing Editor for both STARLOG and COMICS SCENE has been one of the more influential experiences in my life. I've been a die-hard comics fan since before I could read. When I was two, I was happy enough just to pore through the artwork. By age three, I had figured out why the artwork was there, and I became hooked. No. I became *obsessed*.

My family never quite understood my fascination with this medium; they only realized that: a.) It was a *very* cluttersome hobby which once a week required my Mom

to yell, "Michael! Come in your room and get all these comics off the floor! You're creating a fire hazard!"; b.) It was a very convenient hobby, especially on those long family road trips where your only other choice was to argue with your big sisters over who got a window seat; and c.) It was the one thing that always made me happy, no matter what. Comics were the ultimate cure-all for anything and everything (and still are).

Comics have followed me everywhere. They even went off to college with me, despite my having a part-time job and tons of term papers. You could hardly blame me, especially since by then, comics were no longer just for kids (those who thought otherwise at that point in time had obviously never seen Frank Miller's *Dark Knight Returns*, Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' *Watchmen* or the Miller/David Mazzuchelli runs on *Daredevil* and *Batman*. It's ironic that I studied Journalism for four years, but barely ever read a newspaper 'cause I was so busy reading my comics. While working at the college paper, one of my editors told me my stack of comics was getting too close to the light table, and that it could create a fire hazard (I *still* think that guy was somehow in cahoots with Mom…) Guess it's not so surprising that when it was time to hit the college intern circuit, my first résumé went out to the folks at STARLOG/COMICS SCENE. What *was* surprising (at least *I* thought it was) was that I got the internship.

Upon graduation several months later, two associates suggested to me that it was time I look for "real" work; after all, what could comics—or magazines about comics—do for me? While I realized that comics had just started being recognized as an art form rather than funny books, I'm glad I had the common sense to doubt these "associates," especially since one wanted to be a dancer, and the other an actor. Yeah, *those* were more realistic goals. Sheesh.

I found work at a professional video trade magazine which—coincidentally, of course—was located just across the street from the STARLOG/COMICS SCENE offices. And wouldn't you know it, whenever I had some free time, I would find myself writing articles for STARLOG/COMICS SCENE. "Real" work by day, freelancer by night. Almost sounds like good background for a comic-book character, doesn't it?

Two years later, IT happens, and IT changes my life more irrevocably than a radioactive spider or a dose of gamma radiation. I'm offered the Managing Editor position for both STARLOG and—you guessed it—COMICS SCENE. WOO-HOO! I'll take it, I say. Of course, I was replacing Eddie Berganza, a STARLOG veteran and lunch buddy who had accepted a job he just couldn't pass up. I thought to myself, what could *possibly* be better than a dream job that covers the comics industry? When I ask him this, he answered, "I got an offer to work at DC Comics."

Oh. Somewhere in my occipital lobe, a balloon was losing air—fast.

Needless to say, I got over it quickly. After all, I never intended to work in a field I grew up acknowledging as merely a lifelong pastime. I thought you were supposed to *hate* your job, which would give you a reason to get outta the office right at 5 p.m. Instead, I found myself enjoying any overtime hours I had, 'cause it gave me the chance to learn more about the comics industry. For that, I thank COMICS SCENE Editor Dave McDonnell, a man who I consider both a master at his craft and a good friend whose comics under his desk are more of a fire-hazard than anything I could ever conjure up. He's the reason why COMICS SCENE is celebrating its 50th. Take a bow, Dave. You deserve it. (OK, Dave, you can stop now. Dave…Dave…?)

I eventually followed in Eddie's footsteps and accepted a position with DC Comics, perhaps the only job offer that could have swayed me from COMICS SCENE. As the Assistant Editor on *Zero Hour*, *Legion of Super-Heroes* and *Legionnaires* (and recently, the Superman titles). I love comics more than ever. I admit that I've expanded my horizons in recent years, however. When I'm not working on comics, I like to read my latest issue of COMICS SCENE, work on my game column Gamelog for STARLOG, and occasionally coach a kids' basketball team in my school district. S'funny, though; they only like talking about comics. Guess that explains our 28-game losing streak…

Once again, COMICS SCENE, congratulations, though I *do* have one small complaint about you reaching this milestone. You see, I've got every issue, and all the back issues are *really* starting to pile up. It's creating one heck-uva fire hazard in my office…

—Michael McAvennie

Michael McAvennie worked on COMICS SCENE as intern, freelance writer and then Managing Editor (1989-1992). He's currently Assistant Editor of DC's Superman *and* Legion *titles.*

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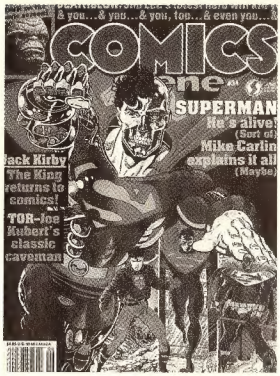

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BUILDING ALL THE NEW
Plus: Jerry Robinson & Jae Lee
COMIC-BOOK

Family Memories

When I was 16 years old, I began working as an intern at STARLOG. Then-Managing Editor Dan Dickholtz introduced me to comics. Already a fan of the current *Spider-Man* and *Daredevil*, he *told me* the story of the death of Captain Stacy, and the story of the Green Goblin. It was as if these characters were *alive*, and in fact to him and kids all over, they were, and are.

It's the stories that adult men tell you about their experiences with comics—they remember how many copies of each issue they had, which ones they used to have, and which ones of their friends had all the issues of *X-Men*, *Thor* or *Daredevil*. Just ask my dad, now 40, whose face lit up like a child's when I told him I work with Flo Steinberg and John Romita, and about when I met Stan Lee and John Buscema. And imagine my thrill at being able to tell him all about them—all of his childhood heroes, such as Spider-Man and Thor himself. It's as the "Fabulous" Flo Steinberg told me, "They never forget their boyhoods, Lia" in her lovely lilting voice, just like on the record that came with my Dad's membership in the Merry Marvel Marching Society.

It has been two-and-a-half years since I began at Mighty Marvel, almost four since I cringed at the "2093" proposal photocopied for Dave McDonnell and COMICS SCENE, and eight years since I read my first *Spider-Man* comic. That's a lot of my life for someone barely in her 20s, a blink in the comics industry.

Funny, in the office today, my boss (and friend) Joey Cavalieri laughed when Danny Fingeroth used the term "fandom" because "it showed his age." Both of them are young men, my father's age or younger, and they've been reading comics since they could walk. They breathe them and dream them and they're why (cynics beware) there *is* a future to the comic book industry and, though it has taken more than its fair share of shots to the gut, the people who edit them every day still care very much about the industry which has been a part of their entire lives.

Those of us who are lucky enough to work in comics know that it's not all fun and games, but there *is* something that separates a comic book editor, and those who write and draw them, from any other professional. And that is simply the family of characters, both fictional and flesh which brought them up through junior high and high school. For all those kids who never got the girl, there was Peter Parker; for every kid who felt left out or picked on, there were the X-Men, and there was Stan and Jack Kirby and Johnny and Flo. How do I know all this? I certainly didn't live it, but the stories are there, passed on as legend, and sometimes memoir, through the generations. They are the roots of a family tree. And they run deep.

I have had the distinct honor of working within this family and more specifically with my immediate Marvel 2099 family, which until very recently consisted of Joey Cavalieri, Matt Morra and me. I worked, grew up and have grown to love that which I cringed at not so long ago. They are people who have shared with me their true love of a personal medium. People I will always remember. And the 2099 characters they created will always have the same place for me as Spider-Man and Jack Kirby had for my father.

Happy 50th, COMICS SCENE. Here's to the future!

—*Lia Pelosi*

Lia Pelosi, first an intern and later an editorial staffer for COMICS SCENE (1990-1992), served as Assistant Editor for Marvel Age. *She's now Assistant Editor of Marvel's* 2099 *titles.*

Life of a Comics Kid

Comic books. *Sigh.*

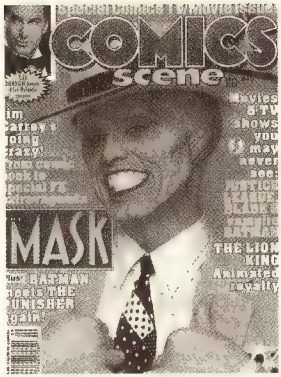
They've been such a part of my life for what seems like so long now that I can't really think of going a week without one. Which is odd, I guess. I remember sitting in lunch in high school, comic book in hand, friends around me, I would be reading, they would be talking. Normal stuff. Only thing was, is that, well, I'm female and as my Mom said for years, "Girls *don't* read comics."

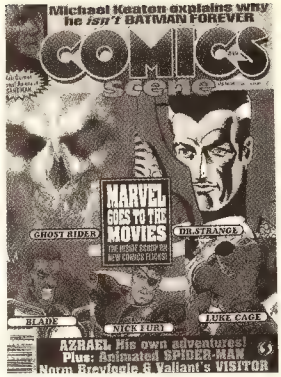
But you read Archie Comics, right, Mom? And probably Disney and Harvey stuff. But girls don't read superhero comics, let alone enjoy them.

Well, that's where they're wrong.

I do call myself a superhero "geek" not for any freakish reason other than I'll read *Flash* before I read *Sin City*. Really.

The first comics magazine I *ever* saw was COMICS SCENE. There it was in a bookstore and I bought it. I believe it was issue #7, with the *Return of Swamp Thing* movie cover. That was the first time I ever saw a magazine solely devoted to comics and their kin. I was impressed. Over the next few years, I discovered more issues of CS, some other comics-related publications, and a large variety of comic books that I never thought possible. I got through high school with comics in my hand,





and worked my way to college and found a whole group of other people who also read comics. (*Wow!*)

Majoring in Communication Arts, I took a wide range of publishing and editing courses focusing on a career in the magazine field. I did, however, throw in my hobby by writing term papers on comics. (And doing quite well with them, I might add.) And, lo and behold, if the two things (my major and hobby) didn't come together in one nice intern package.

A letter with the recognizable name of Mike McAvennie (he and I are alumnus of the same school, St. John's University) on STARLOG letterhead set me on my way to the Park Avenue South office for a semester of proofreading, copy editing, captioning, Tom Weaver, movie screenings, free comics and more information about more things than I could ever imagine.

Then, as the semester was ending, I remember a conversation that went something like this:

"So, kiddo," said Dave McDonnell, "what are you doing after graduation?"

"Looking for a job, I guess," I replied.

"You wanna work here?" he asked.

"Sure."

Next thing I know, I'm Associate Editor, then Managing Editor, then on my way to LA for the Ultraverse conference, then running down the block to meet the Marvel publicity rep, then going to lunch with a DC editor, then going for another lunch with a Valiant rep, then I'm on the phone for a good half-hour with someone from Dark Horse, and then the Image guy calls me...and then I get to caption a *Star Trek* story for STARLOG. But I was overwhelmed and fascinated by all these people who worked on something I liked and knew. And one of the more popular reactions was "You like comics? You're a *girl*!"

And yes, I like comics.

Still do. Even though they take up a good 12 hours of my day, now. I followed Mike McAvennie again. This time to DC Comics. (After coming *really* close to going to Malibu.) I do miss working on COMICS SCENE even though I'm not that far away, my job is working with the comics press. And the idea's still the same, that I could influence someone to read something else. To pick up a different comic book, just once, to try it out. And maybe they'll see something they like, something they *wouldn't* have read before.

My goals, when it comes to comics, haven't changed that much. The industry is changing right now, as we speak, and will continue to change, but the art form remains. It's as much fun as it was when I was 13, in fact, there is more for me (and you) to choose from. But my new goal for comics, is to get more people to read them. Get those non-comics readers to become comics readers. I preach to the converted, this I know. But if every comics fan suggested a book to a non-fan friend, even let them borrow one, you might be surprised at what happens.

I still read more comics than I ought to, my Mom's off my back about "girls reading comics" though, partly because I'm making a living at it now, and partly because (unlike Mike McAvennie) I keep all my comics in boxes. Of course, I don't get overly excited about every book that comes out, but in the normal course of things, there's a book that just stands out and I can't wait for the next month's issue.

Comics are important to me, and to so many of the people who work in the industry. It's one of the few industries where you can find people who truly love what they do, and always have.

And hey, I also had the honor of being killed by my favorite character in the book that got me hooked on comics. I got done in by Changeling in *The New Titans* #118. Ah, the glorious life of a comics kid.

—*Maureen McTigue*

Maureen McTigue also served as an intern, editorial staffer and eventually Managing Editor of COMICS SCENE (1992-94). She is now DC's Assistant Manager of Marketing Communications.

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For Advertising Sales: The Faust Company, 24050 Madison Street, Suite 101, Torrance, CA 90505 (310) 373-9604 FAX (310) 373-8760 Attention: Dick Faust

THE FUTURE OF COMICS

To celebrate this 50th issue, COMICS SCENE asked 50 notable comics creators to answer this provocative question:

As the Millennium approaches, what do you see as the future of comics?

Will Eisner: "I see tremendous growth. I think a turn is being taken in which, at long last, the content will dominate the package. For too long, comics have been purely a packaging product. I see a great future in comics. I see more people getting into the field. I think it's going to achieve what it has always dreamed of achieving in the '90s—becoming a truly literary form."

Green Lantern and Green Arrow by Neal Adams.

Joe Simon: "Changes in five years? Not a helluva lot! I expect the field to shrink by two-thirds. The remaining titles will be stronger. Later, look for comics to be done in holograms, metallic pages, audio and other forms of dimensional effects. You will notice that I have *not* mentioned story content. Guess why not!"

Julie Schwartz: "The future I hope to see is that I'll still be alive—because I'll be 85 years old. Actually, in the last three years, I've not paid too much attention to comics. I'm kind of bored by them. Change is running rampant. It's really tough. I'm not sure comics will appear as comics magazines. I don't know too much about CD-ROM and computer stuff, but I imagine some of it's going to end up there. Of course, that's not going to be as much fun as picking up a comic off the rack and leafing through the pages!"

The Spirit. Copyright 1974 Will Eisner

The Spirit by Will Eisner.

Stan Lee: "It seems to me they'll get bigger and bigger. The audience seems to be growing all the time. What with CD-ROM and all the different ways that comics can be produced with the new coloring methods and computerization, I just foresee comics becoming *more* popular as years go by."

Neal Adams: "I would say the comic book industry, at this moment, is in a very precarious position, because *nobody* seems to know where it's going. There seems to be a direction of consolidation, perhaps with a smaller number of companies. That's never good, but there seems to be a sufficient number of independents to make it impossible for the two major companies to retain a major foothold on the industry. There are too many people who have the ability to remain independent for that to happen. Even if creators fold and go with DC or Marvel, there will still be people on the outside doing stuff, so I think the first goal of the last generation of comic book artists has been achieved. A once downtrodden group of creators are now quite a bit taller, and ready to stand up for themselves, so I don't think we're going to fall into another dark age of comic books.

"There is a definite consolidation going on, and many people have lost a lot of money. Everybody tries to hype the industry, giving us a false impression that the industry is still vital, when in fact it is going through a very difficult recession. I have total confidence that it will come out of the recession, but it will probably leave an awful lot of dead bodies strewn along the path.

"Given that I've had a lot to do with affecting the change and causing all these revolutionary things to happen, I sit back like a father, wondering how the child is going to grow up, and worrying about it. It's going through its teen years now, and its heart is being broken, but in the end, I'm very confident it will come out an adult industry that will have strength and all sorts of positive elements going on.

"One of the things that the major companies have to worry about is the responsibility of bringing a new audience into comic books. You have comic books that seem to be focused on an awful lot of adults, but the industry is not looking carefully at what's happening in Europe. Too many fans and creators have grown up and they're now adults, and too many publishers think they're adults, but we've forgotten that comic books are basically rock and roll. If you don't get back to those roots, you're going to be out of the business. Comic books have to have an awful lot of fun to them, or else the new audience won't come in, and it will take another generation for them to come back.

"There is a danger in having too many sophisticated comic books, aimed at too adult an audience, and

Spawn Copyright 1995 Todd McFarlane

Spawn by Todd McFarlane.

Green Lantern, Green Arrow, Batman, Manhunter, Jonah Hex, Ambush Bug, Superman & Related Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1966,1973, 1983, 1994, 1995 DC Comics Inc.

putting us in danger of a tremendous amount of potential censorship. That's a danger that we haven't felt in this generation, but it's always there, and it is a *real* danger. I can tell you from the people who lived in the '50s, censorship exists, like a giant monster outside your door, or the beast under your bed. If we get too cocky, it will come out and it will smack us down.

"There are dangers out there, and things that we have to watch out for as an industry, but all in all, the reward that has come has been all these wonderful comic books that we're now able to produce."

Art: Copyright 1993 Moebius

Art by Moebius.

Louise Simonson: "I see comics being used for all sorts of things. I see them being used for education and instruction, and I can see them move out of the very narrow entertainment form that they are in this country today. I think comics can really be a valuable teaching tool."

Walt Simonson: "Well, since everything's supposed to end at the Millennium, I certainly wouldn't prognosticate beyond that! That's still five years away, and the industry has changed so much in just the last five years, that by the time the year 2000 rolls around, boy, I don't have *any* idea what's going to be happening!"

Archie Goodwin: "Comic books will probably still be a lot like they are now. I hope at some point we'll have found a way to expand, maybe into CD-ROM, instead of just the comic form. That form will always have appeal, but you can have a story about a comic book character in the equivalent of a graphic novel, and then if you thought, 'Gee, I wonder what this character's origin was like?' you would be able to access something that would show you the comic-book version of this guy's origin one, five or 20 years ago. You could have fact sheets about the character, supplementary material about the stories, or play out one aspect of the character's life. It's an untapped realm, and I see it as a logical place for comic books to be. CD-ROMs can be a combination of story and pictures, and I think comics would work very well in that format."

Mike Carlin: "Comics that aren't on paper—I would imagine that's what people will see. I mean, I would like for there to *still* be paper comics, but I don't know if that's realistic at this point. We'll definitely be seeing comics on the Internet by the year 2000. People don't seem to care about not being able to roll up a computer and stick it in their back pocket!"

Larry Marder's Beanworld.

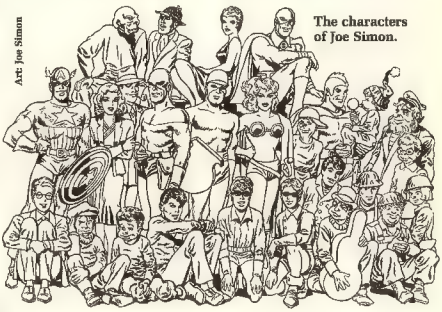
Beanworld: Trademark & Copyright 1992 Larry Marder

Timothy Truman: "They will be more computer-based. I think publishers are going to want to get into that, because it'll be less expensive for them to produce full line art, and it'll be faster for the artists to produce it. I don't see much of a change in overall fan tastes, even though we do have all this alternative material. I've been hopeful that we *would* see a change in fan tastes, but we haven't. I think we will be seeing even more of a change in the tastes of creators.

"Every year, maybe one percent of the creators become a little more adventurous—that might sound snooty for basically an adventure artist to say, but as far as the material I'm reading, I see things getting a little more adventurous. I don't think it's selling. We always kind of pander to the in-between. I think more creators might get a little more adventurous, but they'll be getting adventurous on a computer!"

Roy Thomas: "First, of course, the Millennium itself has no importance at all, except in the minds of those who feel numbers have a magical property and try to pick 'lucky numbers' on state lotteries. There isn't even a general agreement on whether it begins in 2000 or 2001. That aside, I believe technically the future of comics for the most part won't be on the printed page at all, but on the computer screen, on CD-ROMs, and in whatever additional technology lies just around the corner. My own interest is primarily in comics in book and magazine form, but still, it will be interesting to watch—and perhaps even take part in the changes, if I'm fortunate enough to do so.

"As to the types of stories that will be involved—well, I expect to see the decline of story that we've experienced in recent years continue. It will be replaced by more rock-star-type posturing, more sound-and-fury-signifying-if-possible-even-less-than-they-did-in-old-line-comics, and interactive comics. I suppose the interactive thing will indeed get bigger, though my own view is that such devices give reader or viewer the illusion of being 'creative,' when in reality all his choices have been scripted for him just as surely—though in a different way—as they are in a standard novel or comic. Still, it will be an exciting time."



The characters of Joe Simon.

Art: Joe Simon

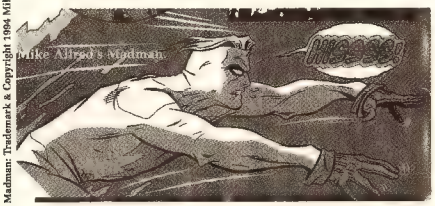
Bill Sienkiewicz: "I still see superheroes, but I also see much more computer-oriented and CD-ROM technology being used, and I'm assuming that there's going to be motion involved."

Mike Richardson: "We'll see more electronic product. I see more media-hyped projects like *The Tick* and *The Mask*, which is coming out as an animated series, that are fueled by other areas of the entertainment industry, and tied in with toy lines. I know that some people feel that will be the *death* of comics, but those types of things have happened for a long time. There will just be more of them."

Wendy Pini: "Because I'm out here [in California] working on the *Elfquest* film, I've had a chance to see how Hollywood looks at the comics industry. Right now, there is more of a marriage between what's going on in comics and in the movies than ever before. Hollywood has finally caught on to the fact that comics and graphic novels are a great source of material, so without pretending to be all-knowing on the subject, I would have to say that the future of the comics industry is very closely tied to all other forms of media.

"I don't see the industry being as isolated, or the cult thing it has been for so long. The day is coming before the turn of the century when we're going to see more and more multi-media stores that include all kinds of products: virtual reality, CD-ROM games, books, comics, graphic novels—all related to the types of subject matter that entertain people.

"I don't see stores devoted exclusively to selling comic books continuing on as they have so far. I see them turning into multi-media stores, where if you have a favorite comic-book character, you can walk over to the next shelf and buy the game or toy related to that character. There will be more and more media tie-ins for comics, and vice versa. It seems almost inevitable that TV, film, music, toys, games, books and comics are going to become inter-related."



Madman: Trademark & Copyright 1994 Mike Allred

John Romita Sr.: "I was always one of those doom-sayers who felt comics were always one year away from the end, and then we went through a long stretch where comics just built. My impression is that there's no reason for comics to go under, except for reader apathy. And if we encounter reader apathy—whether through our own machinations or through a trick of the market and reader mentality—then what can we do? If nobody buys your product, you have to stop producing. That's the only way the industry will ever die. So we're going to have diversity in the market. Whatever people will buy, we'll sell. Whatever they don't want, we'll cut."

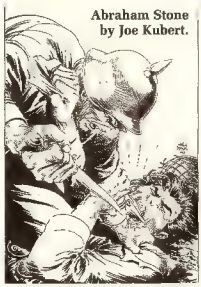
John Romita Jr.: "I hope comics return to story-telling, and this flash-in-the-pan, pinup style of art has gone by the wayside. I think it already has, but I hope that comics return to good old-fashioned storytelling. I don't mean to sound like a fuddy-duddy, I just think that comics were meant to be a form of cinematic story-telling in stop-action form, and I hope that's what they go back to. They took a couple of years off because a couple of people decided they would rather draw fancy-looking pictures than good stories, but I think it's going to return to story-telling—at least, I hope it does!"

Jim Shooter: "The future of the comics medium is bright, but the business is about to undergo dramatic and also traumatic changes. Creativity will carry us through."

Jim Starlin: "That's a very hard question, because so much is changing, even over the last year or so. I see the computer coming much more heavily into every aspect of comics. I'm working with a computer coloring company now, and it has changed the way I look at comic books quite completely. Eventually, there will come a time when they'll no longer even be drawn on paper, though we're not at that point yet. Computers make for radical changes, and probably for the better. In fact, some of the CD-ROMs now are basically interactive comics. There's one out now called *Gadget* which is basically a science fiction mystery, where you walk through corridors and talk to people and get clues. It's very much a comic book. Computers aren't going to diminish the creativity needed to do a good comic book, they're just going to make it a different ball game."

Keith Giffen: "Four-color crack. Comics have got to become the wildest high you can get within the time that you're reading it, and they've gotta demand that you come back for more. Make it fun again! Let's be a little dangerous and subversive."

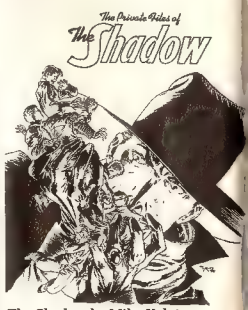
Bobbie Chase: "I would like to see a larger market, seeing comic books in more homes—and less of a niche marketplace. I would like to see more woman readers and woman artists, and more variety in product than we currently have. I would also like to see us getting away from a collectible marketplace, which I think is already happening. There are lots of people who would argue that point, but we're attracting more readers and fewer collectors to the market. Whether someone is an editor, writer or artist, they should feel that they want their product read by more people, rather than having it placed in a bag and stowed away somewhere."


Abraham Stone by Joe Kubert.

Stone: Trademark & Copyright 1994 Joe Kubert

Denys Cowan: "By the year 2000, I think the importance of the direct market will be diminished to a large extent, and the emphasis will be more on the mass market, for the publishers as well as the consumers. People who buy comics will want them everywhere, and clearly that's where the industry is moving.

"Creatively, that is a tougher call, because comics have not changed that much in the last 50 years. The basic art form is still in its infancy, so there will be some changes, but whether they'll be dramatic changes, I don't know. In terms of content, I don't think we've scratched the surface, and by 2000, I don't know if they'll be as that different. I hope they'll at least be at the level of Japan, where comics are in *every* part of the marketplace, for every type of consumer."



The Shadow by Mike Kaluta.

Carmine Infantino: "It needs a radical change. It may have to take a different form. In fact, I'm almost certain of that."

Barry Windsor-Smith: "I know what I would *like* to see, but what I really see as the future of comic books will be business interests over creative quality and interest in creativity. It will

become what it's becoming now, which is more and more of a commodity like corn flakes, and less and less having anything whatsoever to do with what the more intelligent people want it to be. That's what I *fear* will happen to this field, because that is what has been happening day in and day out, more and more, ever since the inception of Superman in *Action #1*. Now that it has become the semi-big business that it is, it can only get worse. That's the down side.

Flagg: Copyright 1988 First Comics and Howard Chaykin

American Flagg by Howard Chaykin.

"What I would *like* to see happen is a whole different thing. I would like to see the creators take further control of their work; stop calling it a product and start calling it *art*. I would like to see more intelligent and adult and verified writers attracted to the industry. And, I would like to see emphasis put back on story content and character."

Peter David: "From the supply and retail side, I think Marvel's purchase of Heroes World Distribution marks a major change in the way we're going to be seeing comic books distributed in the marketplace. Although at the moment, everybody seems to be saying that the status will remain quo, I don't think that will remotely be the case. We'll be seeing more and more of the various publishers splitting off and either doing their own distribution, or working out exclusivity deals with the distributors. I think one of the two major distributors is either going to go away or be absorbed by the other. The emphasis is going to be more on the major companies, and less and less on the various independent companies, which is really a crying shame. The independents are going to find that their work is going to become more difficult, not less, and there's going to be more fighting for rack space, which will be controlled by a mere handful of people.

"What we're really seeing is a trend that has long been part of America spreading further and further into this industry, and that is having everything done by large chains, rather than individuals. Video stores are either being pushed out of business, or given serious competition by Blockbuster, which is opening up all over the place. Everything is becoming chains, everything is becoming 'Big big big,' and we're going to be seeing the loss of individualization and personal detail as things become part of an overall program.

Batman, Robin and Blockbuster by Carmine Infantino.

"Creatively, we seem to be swinging from one direction to the other. In the '70s, we saw a major emphasis on writing. You would have comic books come out with these huge, incredibly dense captions filled with words and words and words, and the art was almost secondary to the story. Now, comic books have pretty much become art-driven, rather than story-driven, where as long as it looks good, it does not matter if it doesn't make any sense. It's a part of the overall lessening of demands by the audience. People in comics give the audience what they want, and if the audience wants big guys with rippling muscles, trashing entire city blocks of abandoned housing scheduled for demolition, then that's *all* they'll get.

"The level of entertainment rises or drops down to the level that the audience requires. What happens is that people see something that's successful, and they try to imitate its success. I can assure you that *Dumb and Dumber*, which became a box-office hit, is not going to encourage moviemakers to produce more intelligent films, just as we're seeing more special FX-laden films, in a race to make bigger and bigger FX in movies. So you will now see dumb and dumber films in terms of comedies, and in comic books, there has been a race to make comic books that require as little thought as possible. That's probably going to swing back in the other direction, although I'm not sure how fast that will be.

"You will also see a greater use of computers as tools for producing comic books. This is something I've speculated on in the past: the notion that computers will create a level playing field for people who are either barely adequate, or totally incapable artists, to nevertheless produce comics. They will become writer/artists as it were, through the use of computers. This statement of mine in the past has been misinterpreted to mean, 'Oh well, artists will become almost unnecessary in the future.' No, I never said that. What I said is that through the use of various means of technology, it will simply become a more level playing field, where the best stories will be told by the best creators, period. Ideally, there will then be an audience there to receive it."

Todd McFarlane: "I see diversification on a lot of levels. I don't think that comic shops are going to be able to continue to just sell comic books *per se*, like they've been doing. The strong retail outlets are going to be the ones that appeal to a wider audience. There'll be more of a struggle for publishers to get their characters into different media, whether that's good for the property or not. But, if you diversify and bring in a wider audience, you have a better chance of going into areas that are not as stereotypical of where the comic book shop is at right now. The diversified stores or chains are more apt to survive right now than comic shops, *per se*."

Sable: Copyright 1988 First Comics

Jon Sable by Mike Grell.

Gil Kane: "Comics have developed to a point where heroic fantasy has gone way past the point Jack Kirby ever thought about. There's virtually *no* story. It's a series of pinups, in effect. The next thing that has to happen is the return of stories that are a reflection of a maturing group of people. All the old guys who matured along with their material have left the field. Now the field is full of guys bringing back these very recent adolescent fantasies, and it has to struggle back to a better level of character-driven stories that absorb the reader rather than arresting him with visuals which are so arrogant that they totally dispense with any

Shadow: Trademark & Copyright 1989 Conde Nast Publications, Inc.

kind of story material that gets in its way. There has to be an end to that. Technically, the form is changing so much that my feeling is bookstores eventually will be the proper repository for comics."

Frank Miller: "I foresee comics as accepting their place as part of the publishing industry, where individual voices can be heard a lot louder, and we're no longer tied to genre or brand names—a widening, in terms of content."

THE REST OF THIS TOWN MAY THINK YOU'RE SOME KIND OF SWINGIN' SUPER-HERO, BUT J. JONAH JAMESON IS WISE TO YOU!
NO ONE BUT SPIDER-MAN COULD HAVE PULLED THOSE ROBBERIES!
I THINK YOU'RE TRYING TO TELL ME SOME-THING.
LEE & ROMITA

Spider-Man by John Romita.

Colleen Doran: "Wider variety, more selection and broader mainstream appeal."

Chris Claremont: "I see the future of comics as significantly different from what I would have said a few weeks ago. In the short run, the industry is in for a tremendous amount of commercial ferment. At this stage, I think *nobody* can really honestly say what the commercial marketplace is going to look like three months from now, let alone a year from now, let alone *10* years from now. My hope is that the flexibility and enthusiasm with which DC has approached not only new concepts like Paradox Press, but new ways of doing business, such as the creator-owned deal that they agreed to with my new series, *Sovereign Seven*, is part and parcel of a growth and evolution in the relationships between publishers and creators, and will lead in turn to a continued growth and evolution in the work that the creators provide to the publishers. I hope that comics as an industry become broader and deeper in tone and content, so that perhaps at one remove, you have the traditional superheroes, and at the other end of the spectrum, you have work as personal and evocative as *Maus* or *Stuck Rubber Baby*, with everything possible in between. I think the industry will survive. I pray the medium will continue to grow.

"The one thing I feel sure about is that *nothing* is going to be the same. The acquisition of Heroes' World is part of an ongoing process on Marvel's part. It's no longer appropriate to think of Marvel as a comic book publisher. They are an entertainment conglomerate, of which comic publishing is one arm, in the same sense that MCA is a media conglomerate of which Berkeley/Putnam Books is one arm and Universal Pictures is another arm. The same would apply to Warner Bros. All of the elements combined to the corporate bottom line know one of those elements is paramount—say, perhaps the movies in the case of those studios. In the case of Marvel, you have a corporation that also deals with trading cards and licensed products. They wish to expand into movies, stores, restaurants and amusement parks—there's a Marvel boutique in F.A.O. Schwarz—and publishing is an element in the mix. It is *not* the be-all and end-all. In our industry, we're used to publishing as the end-all and be-all. I think they're not playing the same game anymore, much less by the same set of rules, and the challenge to the other companies, to the entire creative community and to the audience is: How are you going to deal with this? Will we allow Marvel to dictate the rules of engagement, so to speak, or come up with a whole different playing field, where Marvel is relevant to itself, but not to the rest of us? Or, will we beat them at their own game? The point is, there's a tremendous up-side and down-side potential."

Jim Lee: "Fewer publishers, fewer distributors, and hopefully fewer titles. I think there will be a consolidation of sorts. You can't go through the massive expansion and subsequent decline we've gone through without a serious restructuring. I think people certainly got over-extended because they *had* to, and business pressures were on distributors and publishers to expand, and they did so. When it collapsed, they had to take a hard hit. It surprises me that it took so long for it to get to this point. But, I think comics will re-stabilize, and there will be slow but steady growth once again, until the next bunch of speculators jump in!"

Mike Allred: "I see a future where the hottest-selling titles are creator-owned and controlled, where publishers function as a conduit to help promote

Elfquest: Copyright 1994 Warp Graphics, Inc.

The Elfquest characters by Wendy Pini.

and maintain and do the business, so the creators can concentrate on being creative, having full control of all aspects of their creations. In short, I feel encouraged by the increasing success of books that are created, written and drawn by their owners. Just judging by the arrival of the direct market in the '80s and its success, and the lack of ability of company-owned and controlled creations to maintain *any* continuity or quality, the best way to control the quality, intensity and affection for the creation is for those who created it to continue creating and to control it!

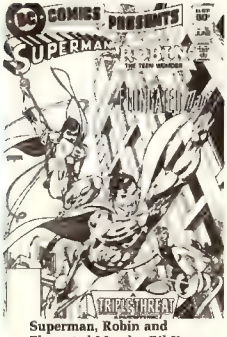
"I see a lot of quality work out there that's successful and is doing well, but it's not necessarily in the Top 100. The fans are discovering that if they invest their time and money and affection in creator-owned work, they're gonna find a nice, clear, uncluttered,

Jonah Hex by Tim Truman.

uninterfered-with product that will be more than product—it will be more of a personal relationship between the reader and creator, and also there will be a trust there. It's encouraging that *Spawn* is the bestselling comic, for instance, because you know that there's one person making decisions for that creation, and that's the creator. Hopefully, more and more creator-owned work is going to be popping up in the Top 10, and the fans are going to move toward that stuff, knowing that the money they spend and the time they invest, all of that energy is being directed to the people who deserve that success, because they worked for it, and it hasn't been taken from them and changed or altered or ruined, in most cases, by somebody who had *nothing* to do with its creation."

Spider-Man, Thor & Related Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1970, 1983, 1995 Marvel Entertainment Inc.

Joe Sinnott: "There has been a little downturn this year, but things can only improve. There are fields that haven't even been explored yet, which is quite evident in the way things have been exploding over



Superman, Robin and Elongated Man by Gil Kane.

the last 10 or 15 years in comics. There are still many things that haven't been done."

Phil Foglio: "I see the probable death of the Big Two, or at least a much wider acceptance of independents. Marvel has bought their own distributor and is talking about setting up Marvel stores; if they don't get slapped with monopolistic practices or restraint of trade or something, many of the smaller stores are going to have to promote independents just to survive! That's certainly good news as far as quality is concerned. Many store owners are not pleased with the amount of bad comics that the companies are putting out. Marvel just made a major cutback in the number of comics they're putting out and just fired a bunch of people, but still, whether they're going to continue to put out bad comics or whether that will improve will pretty much determine what happens."

Karen Berger: "Optimistically, I would like to think that the comics' audience will expand. It's expanded somewhat in the past decade, but it could use a *major* expansion out into the general public."

Rob Liefeld: "The future of comics is something we talk about around here every day. I think the medium, the actual 32-page stapled format, will survive, but there will be big changes in the way it is sold and marketed. I'm afraid that we may have to start polybagging *every* comic and throwing in trading cards, bubble gum and a decoder ring. I fear that comic books could become big trading card packages wrapped in nice silver foil with a big red bow. Kids want more for their money, and we're in a very competitive market with video games.

"To be perfectly honest, I think comic books, even the most mainstream comics, are going to be seen as more of an underground thing,

Big Numbers: Copyright 1989 Alan Moore & Bill Sienkiewicz

and the cyberpunk generation is going to abandon them, in large part because they *aren't* as exciting as video games. We have a generation that isn't reading, it's worrying about getting to level 13 on video games. They're just playing video games all day long, and that's going to negatively affect comic books. The form will survive, but after the year 2000, I just think comics are going to be very underground, and specialty shops will be almost the only places you see them.

"Comics are making inroads at all these major outlets, and I don't think they're going to sell. And if they don't sell, they're just going to be weeded out again, and we'll all be worse off than we were before. Right now we have comics retail stores, and we're doing basically nothing to keep them strong, and I think the retailer is the guy who has the toughest fight out there. The distribution channels are changing, and the licensing keeps the comics alive.

"I think we've taken the 32-page comic book format about as far as it can go, in terms of computer coloring and paper—and it's not just an Image thing any more—everyone seems to be using computers and shiny paper, and the format is about as good as it can get. But why is a kid going to pay $2.50 to look at heroes on paper, when they can be a comic-book hero on a video screen, and get an adrenaline rush beating the snot out of the bad guys? I know the adrenaline rush that *I* get when I play, and I'm 27 years old!

That is the fight that we face."

Bob Layton: "It's easier to say, 'What's the future of entertainment?' As everyone knows, we're approaching a Millennium in which print doesn't seem to be the most effective way to entertain people, so it's hard to say. All I know is what people perceive as difficulty in the marketplace, I see as part of the evolutionary process. We, as an industry, are evolving, and we're not really sure what we're going to become yet. That's true with society in general, but as far as comics go, I think the guys who are really good will do really good stuff! In the next decade, we'll probably see a real departure from the traditional guy in long underwear running around looking for crime. I personally would like to see a return to an era with a very diverse amount of product, including Westerns and romance comics. I'm meeting professionals who talk glowingly of doing romance comics or Gothic horror

Manhunter by Walt Simonson.

comics! Until the last couple of decades, the history of comics has always been one of very diverse subject matters, and I think it has now become this very narrow 'shooting fish in a barrel' type of thing. If we're to survive as a group, we'll have to reach beyond our narrow confines as the subculture that we are, and to do that, we have to give them a *variety* of products."

Moebius: "In the coming decade, it is likely that we will see comics evolving in two directions. First, there will be products aimed for mass consumption, easily read and quickly discarded, of mediocre quality, probably produced as cheaply as possible. On the other hand, there will also be prestige comics, worthy of being collected, with greater literary and artistic values, reflecting a real investment on the part of their creator(s). All this will naturally be subject to the economic context of the times. History generally proves that good periods are more favorable to artistic creation.

"Another phenomenon whose importance will keep growing in the coming years is multi-media, which may be good for comics because

of the new possibilities as far as sound and interactivity it offers; on the other hand, there is the risk that it may *kill* comics, at least in their traditional form."

Doug Moench: "I just mentioned to some people at DC to get the jump on what I think could be a future trends—some sort of subscription on-line delivery of comics. You could punch up *Batman #572* and you're charged 79¢, and it would be down-loaded into your computer—you could

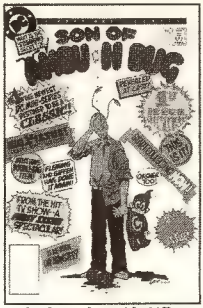
Dreadstar: Copyright 1982 Jim Starlin

Dreadstar by Jim Starlin.

save it on a disk if you wanted or just read it on the screen and dump it—it's up to you! This was not ment with much enthusiasm, but I think it's one possibility. Monitor resolution would have to get quite a bit better before it would duplicate the experience of seeing it printed on a page, but it's going to happen."

John Ostrander: "The future is going to continue to be closer to the merchandising and retailing end. Where I see comics now is with everyone hooking up to some larger support unit, like Valiant has with Acclaim. Comics have a real bottom-line importance in terms of licensing—everything from CD-ROMs to movies and television. People are really discovering that comics are a relatively inexpensive way to develop new material that can be licensed in a variety of different ways. It's so much cheaper to do a year's worth of comics than a TV pilot or a movie draft of the concept. If it works in comics, you can easily adapt it to movies or television, and I think that's going to become increasingly important. Any characters developed are doing to have to be adaptable for everything from movies to video games to toys."

Don Simpson: "In the last 18 months, I've gotten a Macintosh computer, gone from being totally in the Stone Age to being somewhat computer literate. I think certainly the desktop publishing influence on comic book production—printing, pre-production and coloring—is here to stay, and it's eventually going to overtake paper altogether. It'll all be on a TV screen of some sort, either over the Internet or on CD-ROM or something like that. Eventually, it will all be hooked to our *eyeballs!*"



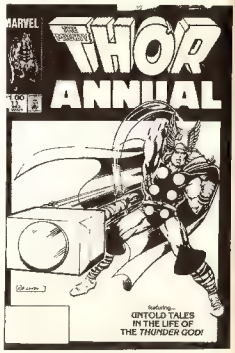
Ambush Bug by Keith Giffen.

Jill Thompson: "I see more self-publishing in the future. People want to put out good comics that they have control over, and it's a huge problem to deal with distributors and printers, but unless you get a good creator-owned deal at an established company, more people are going to be keeping their ideas to themselves. I'm sure the practical applications of the computer will be explored, but not to the extent that everything's going to be done on there—a computer is still a very difficult tool to draw with. People still like to hold a comic in their hands and read it."

Jay Lynch: "Comics will have to come back to shorter stories. As it is now, if someone has an idea for a story, they'll do a six-issue miniseries, even if it only deserves eight pages. The short story is more engaging to the casual reader who wants to read a story without devoting his life to collecting. The delivery system will probably change. In Florida now, Time-Warner is experimenting with a system where you get your publications over a TV screen, and if you want the publication in your house, you can have it printed out in your living room so that you could read it on the bus; you receive a monthly bill, so it's like a magazine subscription. It also means that a magazine doesn't have to remain in print to keep selling. I think you'll get comics on a modem in this manner."

Joe Kubert: "I must admit my attitude is *not* one of pessimism. It's completely and totally the opposite. In having gone through the last 55 years in this business, there have been ups and downs, and sidewards and backwards. Invariably, every time there has been a slide down—and I guess that's what is generating the current pessimism—there has been an equal spurt upwards. And the spurt that occurs after the downplunge invariably is one that pulls the business up perhaps a half or even one full notch. So, I'm not pessimistic about that at all."

Tom Mason: "The comic books themselves are going to stay pretty much the same way they always have been—they'll be 32 pages with full-color covers and interiors and varying paper stocks. Comic books are essentially the same, format-wise, as they have been since the late '30s, even though technology has rapidly improved. We have high-speed phone lines and faxes, we have computers and computerized coloring, we have all this stuff that makes a comic look better, but it doesn't replace the fact that comics are *still* crafted by writers and



Thor by Bob Layton.

artists. How a comic book is assembled has remained the same for over 50 years—the comic books themselves just look better. The production values have improved, and I think they'll continue to do that.

"You might get varying formats in the future, but I don't think comic books will ever fade away. As an industry, we're producing more comic books today than we were 10 years ago, and I assume that with the current market slump the number will be cut down, but people love and respond to the form. A comic book is inexpensive, periodical entertainment that you can take with you anywhere. I see 'em sticking around—I don't see doom and gloom for comics as an art form."

Len Strazewski: "That's a particularly interesting question now, when comics sales are dropping, and fan response has been changing and evolving over the past several years. The future of comics is to be more a part of the multi-media marketing engine. In other words, I don't expect to see a lot of freestanding, *just*-comics being developed, but comics being an extension of things

going on in video games and animation. The comic *character* may be the creative engine behind all of this, but the comic *book* is just going to be one aspect of how that creative engine is used. If you really love comics, you're going to have to develop characters and creative engines for other media, to support the publication of the comic book."

Prophet: Trademark & Copyright 1994 Rob Liefeld

Prophet by Rob Liefeld.

Sin City: Copyright 1992 Frank Miller

Mike Grell: "The comics industry is changing so rapidly that to predict beyond *next week* is difficult. I would say that eventually, I would expect the market to turn back up the way it was a couple of years ago, though whether we reach those levels again, I don't know. There may not be any more rags-to-riches stories, but hopefully there won't be any riches-to-rags stories, either."

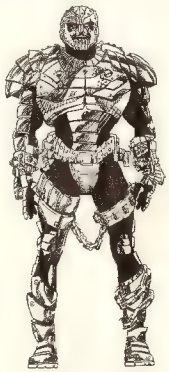
Kurt Busiek: "There are two ways to approach that. One is, 'Where do our best hopes and aspirations and best efforts go?' I think the answer to that is toward more works of individual expression, more people doing what they want to do the way they want to do it. I think that's what will create the high quality, entertaining, intriguing, eye-opening books that will attract and keep an audience, whether that audience is made up of young people, adults, women or any of the wide variety of target audiences that the comic industry desperately needs to retain or reach out to.

"The other question is where the future lies in terms of *what* is going to happen. We're going to see a struggle between more of the same and experiments in which creativity is at the center, instead of marketing. We're in a situation similar to the breakup of the studio system in the movie industry, except it's not so clearcût. The breakup of the studio system was triggered legislatively, as anti-monopoly practices created business opportunities that independent producers took advantage of, and changed the shape of the industry. I think that in comics, we're seeing the same kind of power sliding toward the independent producer, whether the independent producer is Todd McFarlane, Mark Evanier & Sergio Aragones, Frank Miller or whoever. But that's less because somebody told the big companies to divest themselves of near-complete control, and more because they let go. They're trying to grab it again, and either the creators will succeed, or we'll have an uneasy mix, which is more likely by the Millennium—I don't think the penny will have dropped either way in the next five years."

Neil Gaiman: "I have no actual prophetic abilities, so all I can do is some wishful thinking. In terms of wishful thinking, what I would like to see is more comics. I would like to see better comics. I would like to see an enormous variety of more and better comics. I want to see romance comics, cowboy comics, hard-boiled detective comics. I want to see really cool comics for kids, and absolutely terrific comics for little old ladies. What I would like is a world in which comics of high standard are being produced in *every* medium. I don't believe this is likely by the Millennium, but then again, that's what millennia are for: angels will descend from the sky, trumpets will ring, and there will be all sorts of comics that *everybody* will like."

Howard Chaykin: "The future of comics is basically the same old crap, with the occasional bright blip of interesting stuff, usually unexpected and having very little or nothing to do with what people *say* they want."

Larry Marder: "There will always be people who draw comics, and I think that there will always be people who will read comics. I think that the delivery system for these stories, however, is always up in the air, so it certainly looks like comic-type storytelling is going onto the information highway. But, it's almost impossible to say. It's like being in 1895 and trying to figure out what the 20th century will hold for the comic-book medium, which was just being born at that time with the single-frame *Yellow Kid* cartoons. I don't think anybody had any idea of the diversity of product that was going to come up the street, based on the ability to reproduce color pictures. I would say the future for comics is almost limitless!"



Hardware by Denys Cowan.

—Reported by Kim Howard Johnson, Will Murray, Joe Nazzaro & Jean-Marc Lofficier

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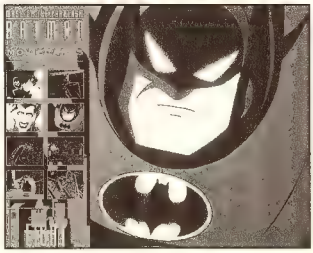

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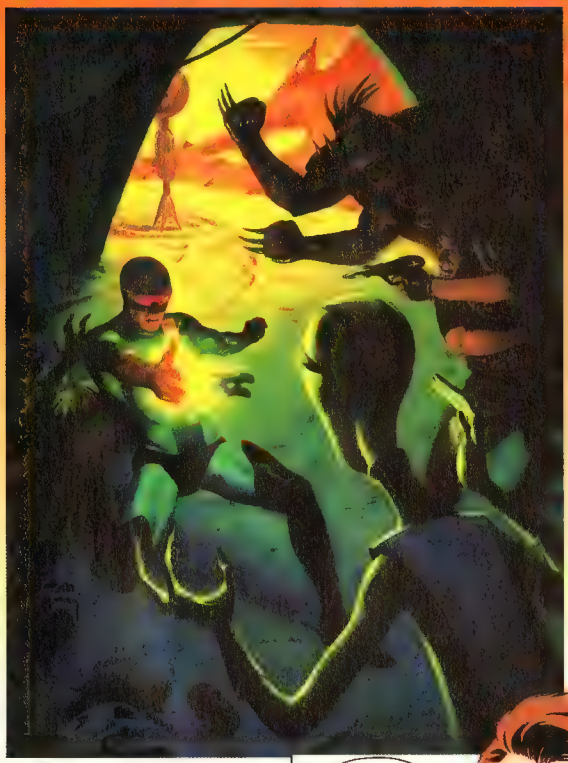
LORD HIGH EXECUTIONER



Nexus Art & Characters Copyright 1985 Mike Baron & Steve Rude

Creators Mike Baron & Steve Rude bring Nexus back for "The Wages of Sin."

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

The mightiest executioner in the galaxy is out to regain his rightful title! *Nexus: The Wages of Sin* is a four-part tale from Dark Horse that's aiming at new readers as well as longtime fans, say co-creators Mike Baron and Steve Rude.

"I've been working on this series for so long and had so much time to think about it, whereas before, I was churning them out on a monthly basis, and what I've produced here are four polished gems that each display a different facet of Nexus' personality," Baron explains. "Some of these ideas came from Dude [artist Rude]—he comes up with a lot of good ideas that are kickers!"

With the series set to run for four issues, the pair enjoyed themselves so much that *The Wages of Sin* will either be extended by several issues or, more likely, be immediately followed by another *Nexus* mini-series.

"We're so stoked on the series that even though we intended it as a mini-series, we're just gonna keep going," says Baron. "I've even written the next issue after that, and we hope to be turning out anywhere from six to eight a year."

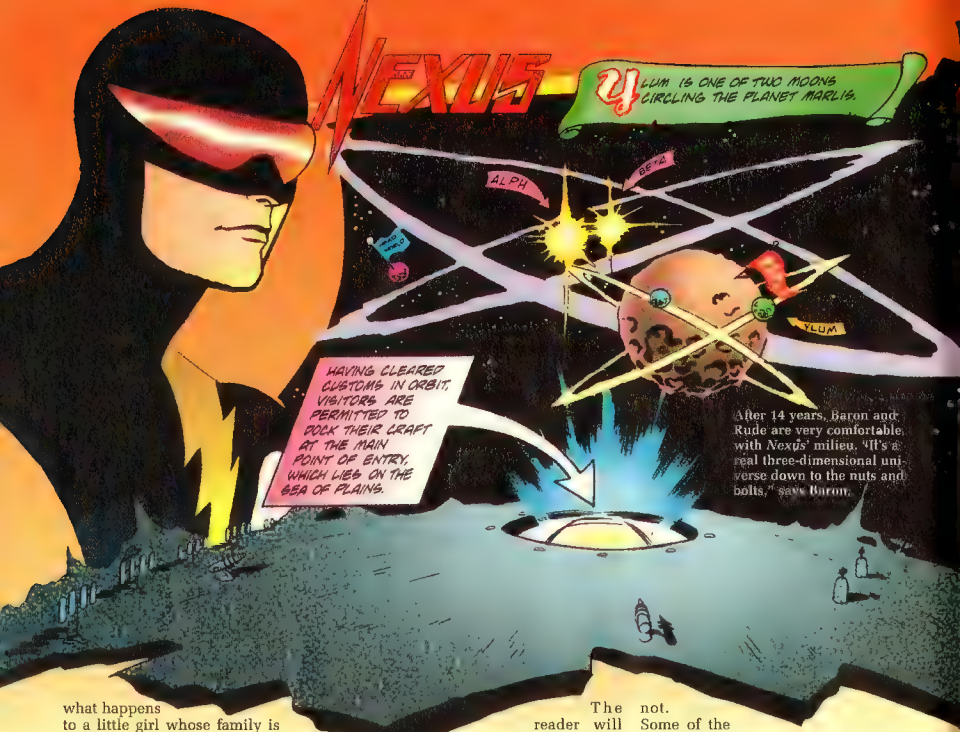
Each of the stories in the current mini-series—"The Client," "The Most Dangerous Man in the World," "Outside Influence" and "Domestic Dispute"—can stand alone, Baron notes.

"*Nexus: The Wages of Sin* is four stories—three are rather grim and the last one is light-hearted. The first one, 'The Client,' is the most poignant, because it's essentially about the futility of man trying to impose a sense of moral order on the Universe, and it's about what happens when he undertakes a mission—not because there are any dreams of murderers or anything, but because he's shocked at

WHERE'S YOUR CLIENT MARFA?
A TRAGEDY! WE DON'T KNOW THE SEVERITY OF HER INJURIES! BY THE TIME WE FOUND OUT, IT WAS TOO LATE!
KITTENS

Horatio Hellpop returns to executing mass murderers as Nexus in four one-issue stories entitled *The Wages of Sin* from writer Mike Baron and artist Steve Rude.

All Art: Steve Rude/Courtesy Dark Horse Comics


NEXUS
YLUM IS ONE OF TWO MOONS CIRCLING THE PLANET MARLIS.
ALPH
BETA
YLUM
HAVING CLEARED CUSTOMS IN ORBIT, VISITORS ARE PERMITTED TO DOCK THEIR CRAFT AT THE MAIN POINT OF ENTRY, WHICH LIES ON THE SEA OF PLAINS.

After 14 years, Baron and Rude are very comfortable with *Nexus*' milieu. "It's a real three-dimensional universe down to the nuts and bolts," says Baron.

what happens to a little girl whose family is wiped out. He sets out to get the killer with the best of intentions, and nothing is as it seems. Everything goes wrong, and even though there's kind of a sense of justice at the end, he feels dissatisfied with the whole adventure.

"The Client," the first of the new stories, is about "the futility of trying to impose a sense of moral order on the Universe," says Baron.

The reader will feel *very* satisfied, because the purpose is to highlight irony, and in the end, I think we've done it superbly. It's one of our most entertaining issues. Readers will be thrilled, because it's the very essence of his dilemma.

" 'The Most Dangerous Man in the Universe' is about a psychotic mass murderer kept in isolation in this hellish prison on a planet on the far side of nowhere," says Baron of issue #2. "He uses the law to affect his surroundings so that he can continue to kill people throughout the Web. The planet is so far removed from the stream of things that it's off the Merk's beaten path, so that by the time Nexus arrives, his power is greatly reduced, and he gets admitted to this prison. He's on his own, and has to use all of his wits to survive. At one point, this psychotic manages to free every killer in the prison!

" 'Outside Influence' is about a planet where there's an experiment to create a completely classless society by making everyone *literally* the same. Even men and women look alike, they dress alike, they're all paid alike. Everyone should be happy, but they're not. Some of the young people are rebelling, and someone is committing a series of hideous sex crimes. At that point, they turn to Nexus, because it never occurred to them that they would need a police force. This was supposed to be a perfect society, and of course the irony here is that by attempting to equalize everyone, you just piss people off. More than that, though, it's a detective story. Nexus can't read these people telepathically because of their genetic makeup, so he has to use sheer detective work to track this guy down. It's Nexus as Sherlock Holmes, but there's also a subtext that I'll leave up to the reader.

"Issue #4 features 'Domestic Dispute,' and it's really about Judah and his girl friend Gladys. Nexus doesn't figure in the main story at all, but there's also a backup story that nobody knows about yet called 'Snapshot,' which leads into the next series. It's an important story involving Nexus."

First appearing in his own Capital Comics title in 1981, Nexus was given his great powers by the alien Merk, who ordered him to seek out and execute mass murderers.

Today's Nexus has much more control over his own destiny, but is still subject to many prior constraints.

"He has worked out a deal with the new Merk, whereby he gets to choose the murderers in exchange for a certain amount of power—less than what he had before, but still enough to make him a scary dude," Baron reveals. "There will plenty of moral dilemmas —you're never free of them—and that's an underlying theme."

Baron (who also discussed his work in CS#1 and #3) explains that he normally doesn't plan his stories out 12 issues in advance, though he and Rude have already developed the follow-up series to *Nexus: The Wages of Sin*.

"I go story by story, and I pick up the threads as I go along, kind of like knitting," says Baron. "I'm not always sure what's going to happen next, but in this case, I have the next four stories *after* the *Wages of Sin* issues mapped out, and they do have a common theme. That theme is a freelance photographer, a war journalist who has covered the most horrendous events in the galaxy. He's burnt out, and shows up in every story with an image. It's that image which forms the basis of the story. These stories are also going to show what happened to the third of the three sisters who became Nexus and turned crazy, and evil; the youngest and most powerful one got away, and she's going to return here."

Baron and Rude now own their creation, thanks to Dark Horse chief Mike Richardson, and it's a hot property; an animated movie is in the works.

THERE ARE THREE OTHERS BEHIND THE MERK
THE MAKING OF
THE
AND THE
I... DRAW UP A CONTRACT
UNENFORCEABLE
NEVER-THELESS, IT'S ALWAYS A GOOD IDEA TO WRITE 'EM WAY DOWN
"BUT HE OH NEXUS
YES
WHY DO YOU DO THAT IT MUST BE DAMAGING TO YOUR SOUL
YOU MEAN APART FROM THE POWER?
YES
IT'S THE ONLY THING I DO WELL

We've been doing this for 14 years, and Baron has always been so good at what he does that I've never had anything inside me that said, 'Gee, I wonder what it'd be like if he went in this direction,' " says Rude. "Well, for some reason, some little creative bell inside of me went off and said, 'I have ideas!' I threw them out at Baron. He's very receptive to that kind of stuff, and so I started to suggest ideas to him, and we would get together and talk about them. All I would basically have to do is suggest something that I had read in the news which might make a good story. He would take it from there and flesh it out into its own little separate world.

"There's the story coming up which is based on the life of a photojournalist who killed himself recently. He had won a Pulitzer Prize but was haunted by violence, and depressed by a close colleague's death. I thought, 'What a great story that would make!' We talked about other things, and I came up with the idea that he would be a journalist who met many of our characters in their younger years. It's all tied in with the world of *Nexus*."

"He has worked out a deal with the new Merk," Baron reveals of the source of Nexus' powers.

"We're so stoked on the series that we're going to keep going," enthuses Baron, who has mapped out a second mini-series.

A collaboration is, like any other relationship, prone to evolution. However, the artist and writer are on steady ground. "It hasn't really changed," says Rude. "We're still the same people we always were and work in the same way. Baron has a strong artistic side that needs to be released somehow, and he does it by drawing out his script on each page."

"That method has stayed the same since the Capital days," explains Baron. "I still break all of my stories down into very small thumbnails, and then when I've got them all figured out, I draw them, still the same size, and put them all on a piece of typing paper, so I can see the entire scope of what I'm trying to say with the book. I've never found a better method, and I still use it!"

tion, but maybe we *have* created our own genre, one that's completely derivative of everything under the Sun, including Laurel and Hardy and the Marx Brothers!"

After the first seven issues were put out by Capital Comics beginning in 1981, *Nexus* was taken over by First Comics, which published it through issue #80. Dark Horse released subsequent *Nexus* mini-series, and publisher Mike Richardson recently gave creators Baron and Rude a quite unexpected gift.

"We now own *Nexus*, thanks to Mike Richardson's unprecedented act of kindness," says Baron. "Mike returned the rights to us. He's a big fan of the book and just generally a stand-up guy, and although there was no profit in it, he felt that it was the right

to reflect our vision to the extent that everyone involved is a big *Nexus* fan and wants to keep it as close to the comics as possible, though I'm not writing it."

"It's still in the beginning stages," adds Rude. "One of the ways that you can judge how things are going is how often you get paid by them, and we haven't gotten paid so far! We have contracts that are signed, but apparently there are still hurdles we have to jump with the people who make decisions to spend the money. Baron and I will be closely associated with everything creative in the movie, but it's impossible to know if it's *really* going to happen yet."

As much as Baron can identify with the character, Nexus is not his four-color alter-ego. "I've never tried to use

I'D WASTED FAR TOO MUCH TIME ON THIS CASE. I COULD HAVE EXECUTED FOUR ACTIVE KILLERS IN THE WEB.
I MUST PLAN MORE EFFICIENTLY. I CAN'T BE SWAYED BY EVERY CHARITY CASE THAT CROSSES MY PATH.

"We think of his genre as science fiction/superhero," reveals Baron.

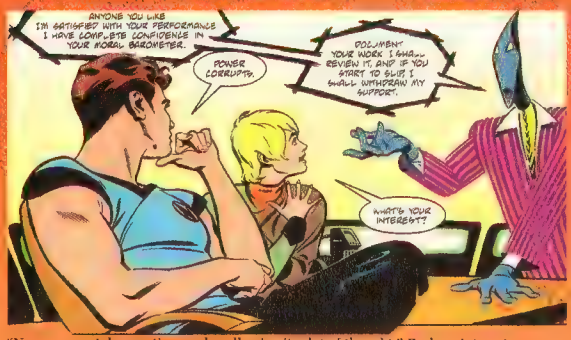
Although he's certainly not a traditional superhero, Nexus has always combined elements of several genres. "We think of his genre as science fiction/superhero," Baron declares. "It's not difficult to pigeonhole in the sense that it's action-adventure science fiction, and we thank Mike, because this property is a hot one, and usually people don't return hot properties."

Nexus is getting hotter by the day, with an animated Hanna-Barbera feature film progressing. "The film is in development," says Baron. "It's going

my characters as mouthpieces," he explains. "I believe my job is to entertain, and in order to entertain anyone else, first I have to entertain myself. If you don't care about what you're doing, you're not going to do a good job. I care passionately about what I'm

doing. I'm trying to entertain myself, and in doing so, I guess I'm trying to surprise myself. If I constantly just coughed up my own views about things, I wouldn't be surprising myself. So, no, Nexus is not my alter-ego, although occasionally my views and his might coincide. It depends on what the story requires."

Nexus has become a much better book since its debut nearly 15 years ago, according to the writer. "Both the writing and the art have become a lot smoother," says Baron. "When I go back and read those early issues, I'm often embarrassed at how clumsy the dialogue is. We have a lot more fun with dialogue in this book than any other, because we have this polyglot future culture which draws on virtually everything. There's a freshness of language there that thrills me. I mean, I'm such an egomaniac—I put the words in the characters' mouths, and sometimes when I go back and re-read those, I've forgotten what I've written, and it just gives me a zinger that these lines are so fresh! Steve works constantly at his art, trying to find the freshest way to portray everything. He works it all out—not just people and animals, but things, too. It's a real three-dimensional universe, down to the nuts and bolts."


ANYONE YOU LIKE I'M SATISFIED WITH YOUR PERFORMANCE I HAVE COMPLETE CONFIDENCE IN YOUR MORAL BAROMETER.
POWER CORRUPTS.
DOCUMENT YOUR WORK. I SHALL REVIEW IT, AND IF YOU START TO SLIP, I SHALL WITHDRAW MY SUPPORT.
WHAT'S YOUR INTEREST?

"Now we can take our time and really give it a lot of thought," Rude points out. He doesn't miss the rigors of doing a monthly series.

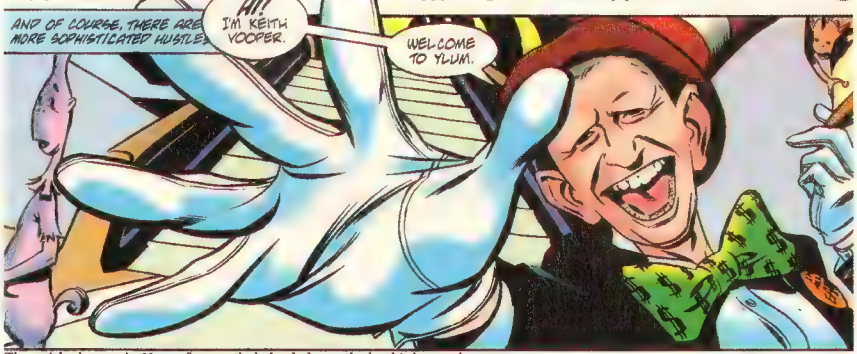
Baron has several non-*Nexus* projects coming up as well, including a new series called *War Masters* for Acclaim Comics that picks up where *H.A.R.D. Corps* left off, featuring the remnants of that team. "It's going to be very gritty, realistic professional mercenary stuff, with a lot of in-depth character development," says Baron. "It's hi-tech melodrama—the Avengers in *Melrose Place*. It will have its own unique flavor—just be sure you're sitting down! The art is by a new guy named Grey, and it's gonna blow you away." In addition, Baron has a one-shot called *Blockbuster*, a fully painted book about the residents of an apartment block destroyed when the Silver Surfer drags Tyros through it during a battle; the writer is also busy scripting a *Star Wars* series featuring the X-wing Fighters called *Rogue Squadron*.

Rude is comfortable with *Nexus* as a series of mini-series, rather than an ongoing monthly title, because the time constraints work against his artwork. "I look at the time when it was put out as a monthly book as a different period," says Rude. "Now, we can take our time and really give it a lot of thought—not that it always makes a better book. It doesn't necessarily do that, but with my artistic temperament, it suits me better to be able to *not* work under pressure. Some people prefer to work under pressure, but for me, it isn't necessarily better. I still work as hard as I did when I did a monthly book; the only difference is that if I want to take a couple of days off and go someplace with my girl, I can do that without any problem. I know that when people who don't like being under pressure are put under pressure, something's gonna give. With me, I was very unhappy doing a monthly, because I had no choice but to get the books out.

"You know, I wish I could be like Jack Kirby, my role model—I still look at his stuff almost every day at work. One of the reasons we're longevity-minded with *Nexus* is because my personal role models were people who were just getting into their own when they were in their 40s—their greatest periods were still on the horizon! Most people are either gone in 10 years, burnt out or their style has changed—and that's something we don't want to happen. We want to *survive*."

Though Baron has scripted roughly 100 issues of *Nexus*, he says he doesn't think he'll ever grow tired of it. "I just maintain my interest in life, I guess," the scribe relates. "I love what I do. As I grow older, Nexus grows older. As I get new insights, he gets new insights. Story ideas come to me out of left field or from devoted fans."

The longevity of Nexus, on display in *Nexus: The Wages of Sin*, has never looked healthier, and that's the way Mike Baron and Steve Rude intend to keep it. "We're lucky guys," concludes the artist, "because *Nexus* satisfies every part of what I am!"



The quirky humor in *Nexus* frequently helps balance the book's heavy-duty tone.

KNIGHTS TO COME

Meet the newest creature of the night in "Batman Forever."

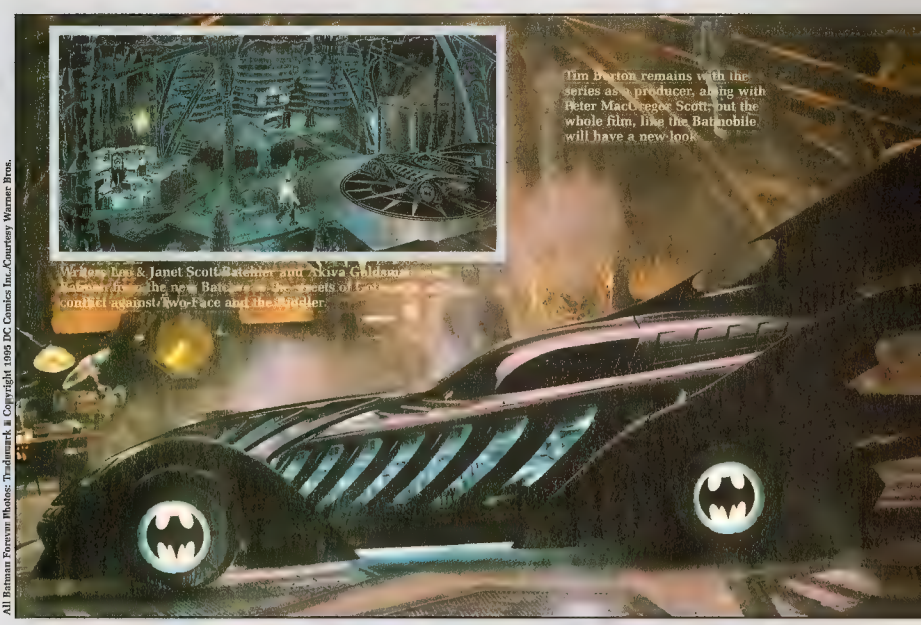
This June, Val Kilmer is the Dark Knight in *Batman Forever*. Joel Schumacher is directing this third installment of the hero's big-screen adventures.

Joining the lovely Nicole Kidman (pictured) as criminal psychiatrist Dr. Chase Meridian as co-stars in *Batman Forever* are Drew Barrymore, Debi Mazar and Ed Begley Jr.

Michael Gough returns as Alfred, serving Kilmer's (pictured) appropriately suave billionaire Bruce Wayne. Pat Hingle is also back as Commissioner Gordon.

The dynamic duo is reborn at last for the movies when Chris O'Donnell dons the costume of Robin, Batman's caped cohort against crime.

All Photos: Ralph Nelson



Tim Burton remains with the series as a producer, along with Peter MacGregor-Scott, but the whole film, like the Batmobile, will have a new look.

Writers Lee & Janet Scott Batchler and Akiva Goldsman [illegible] the new Batman [illegible] streets of [illegible] conflict against Two-Face and the Riddler.

All Batman Forever Photos: Trademark & Copyright 1995 DC Comics Inc./Courtesy Warner Bros.

Design & Layout: Jim McLennon

Academy Award-winning actor Tommy Lee Jones is twice as nasty as former District Attorney Harvey Dent, the malevolent villain called Two-Face.

Riddle me this: Is that manic actor Jim Carrey as tech-head turned super-villain Edward Nygma, better known as the Riddler? Who else?

HOT STUFF

When Joe Quesada & Jimmy Palmiotti start their own comics company, it's a major Event.

By JOE NAZZARO

All Ash Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1995 Invisible College Inc.

When artists Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti started tossing around the idea of creating a new superhero character, they decided to go a few steps further, form their own company and publish the book themselves. The result is *Ash*, the flagship title of Event Comics, and its enthusiastic creators hope it finds a niche in today's highly competitive marketplace.

Ash and Event Comics began with the two creators' long friendship, and their desire to collaborate on a high-quality book of their own. "*Ash* metamorphosed during all the road trips that Jimmy and I took to conventions," Quesada remembers. "We would be hanging around together, going to taverns, and suddenly start saying, 'Wouldn't it be cool to do this, and what about that?' Before we knew it, we had a character."

"We had offers from other companies to publish the book," Palmiotti continues, "but Joe and I do a lot of work for other companies, and there were always things I didn't like about the production, the story, the quality or the way they handled the book in advertising. We both had these same feelings, so realistically, this came out of that feeling of frustration, of doing work for other people and having it thrown around as if nobody cared.

"Joe and I both did well in '93 and '94, as far as making money and getting a certain acclaim for the work we had done, and we both felt it was time to put the money back into comics. We split the initial investment to start the company up, knowing that we were both taking a risk. It may be the worst time for [introducing a new product on] the market, but we felt that we had a good product, we both had a decent fan following and between those two factors, if we could just get people to read the book, hopefully it would live up to people's expectations and eventually gain an audience.

WHAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND IS WHY THEY'RE S'---KEEPING US IN THE DARK...
MAYBE THEY'RE DOING US A FAVOR. MAYBE THERE'S NOT MUCH LEFT TO SEE
I DON'T WANT TO SEE IT. I JUST DON'T WANT TO SEE IT.
22"
BOOM
CLICK

Design & Layout: Jim McLernon

After hanging out with New York firefighters, Palmiotti and Quesada were able to create a believable group of co-workers for *Ash*.

All Ash Art: Joe Quesada/Jimmy Palmiotti/Colors: Reuben Rude

In the real world, this blazing explosion would spell doom for Ashley Quinn, but in the world of *Ash*, these are the fires which forge a hero.

"I thought a fireman would make a great superhero," says *Ash* co-creator and inker Jimmy Palmiotti.

"Ash came about as an idea we had for a superhero. I thought a fireman would make a *great* superhero, and then Joe built on that. We kept going back and forth, and it was actually my brother who came up with the name Ash. It all started coming together, and that's when we thought we had something that would work. We didn't have any sketches when we started the company, but we knew we were going to do something. We had these characters, and Joe had known [editor/publisher] Laurie Bradach for a while, so the three of us got together. She laid out what it would cost us to start up, and our projected sales.

"We all felt that Ash was a strong enough character to launch the company, and that's when Joe and I took a four-week break in Key West and did nothing but write the first three or four issues. We really took ourselves away from everything else and fleshed out the character's look. By the time we came back, we had everything we needed to get started."

For potential readers who still haven't picked up a copy of *Ash*, Palmiotti provides a quick rundown: "The story is about a firefighter named Ashley Quinn, who through a series of events (no pun intended) gets transformed into a mysterious superhero. The basic story is about him dealing with his powers and who his alter-ego is. It also revolves around the firehouse and the basic life of a fireman. There are many strange events happening, and with each issue we'll come closer and closer to telling how he became Ash. It's basically about a superhero fireman, dealing with the everyday problems of being a superhero. The book definitely has an urban feel that we think many people will find appealing."

"The most unique thing about Ash," Quesada adds, "is that he's a firefighter, which is something that has never been done in comics. Superheroes have been newspaper reporters, detectives or ex-military specialists, but nobody has ever done a firefighter, and as far as I'm concerned, they're the truest heroes out there.

"Since Ashley is a firefighter, we'll be dealing with the fact that he's a hero even when he's *not* in the suit. There will come a time when that's a dilemma, because Ash's powers are fire-based. In the first few issues, he has been injured; he isn't back on the squad yet. He'll be joining his ladder company, and there will be scenes where he's going to be in the middle of a blaze and he and his friends are all going to be in danger. Does he become Ash the superhero, or does he remain Ashley the firefighter and try and battle the blaze the normal way? This will create a number of interesting storylines, but eventually people will discover what he is."

And what are Ash's powers, as seen in the first few issues? "At this point, Ash's powers, from what the reader can see, are fire-based," says Quesada. "The closest thing I can compare them to are maybe Green Lantern's powers, where he has the power of green light. Ash is a pyrokinetic, he has the power of controlling flame, to the point where he can make it something tenuous. It's almost as if he can create a liquid out of the flame, that he can harden or soften, working with the flame's molecular structure.

"The way he becomes Ash is by sort of 'blowing chunks,' and this flame comes from inside him and creates a shell around Ash the superhero. There's a lot more to it. We're being nebulous about all this, but we're doing it for a reason. How Ash gets his powers is something we would like to leave a mystery right now. It gets very involved, and once we do that, it gives away the reason why there will be other superheroes in this universe."

Readers will also have to wait a while to find out if Ashley turns into Ash, or is replaced by him, a la the original Captain Marvel. For now, Quesada isn't telling. "You'll probably see more of that around issue #5, but I think it's going to be a mixture of both. Ashley is more than in there; you just don't know what else is in there. Ash the superhero does have an agenda, but unfortunately, Ashley the normal person doesn't quite know

It won't be clear just what Ash is for the first few issues. "Ashley is more than in there; you just don't know what else is in there," hints Quesada.

what that agenda is. This is not to say that Ash is a separate being, but some decisions will have to be made. Are they there to fight fires or save the planet? It has to be one or the other."

As Palmiotti is quick to point out, the firefighting elements are extremely important to the book's overall tone. It's also a subject that neither creator takes lightly.

"When we were researching the fireman aspect, my friend's father, a retired fireman named Bobby Gallowitz—we have a character in the book named Bobby G. based on his personality—took us down to Canal Street in Manhattan and showed us around the firehouse, introduced us to the men, and showed us the procedures. We checked out the equipment, and hung out with them.

"The area of Brooklyn I live in is basically all firemen and policemen, and I'm probably the only Italian in this Irish neighborhood, so it's easy for me to write that sort of middle-class working life. In the back of my head, I've always been fascinated with the work of firemen. It's such a thankless job; they run into a burning building and half the time there's nobody even in it, but they still have to put the fire

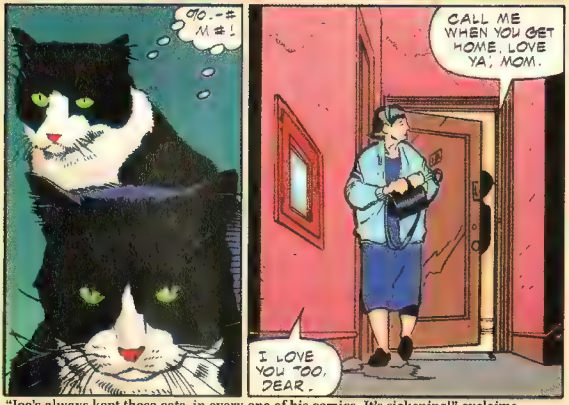
Kid Death & Fluffy: The Other Event

While Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti focus most of their creative energies on *Ash*, they'll also be putting together the *Kid Death & Fluffy Spring Break Special*, a one-shot based on Event's unofficial mascots.

Explains Palmiotti, "Kid Death started out as a card for Creator's Universe, a set of cards by comic book creators, with their own creator-owned characters. He has also appeared in a couple of magazines, and now we're finally going to give him his own spring break special.

"Kid Death is a little kid who's like Dennis the Menace times a million. He's a little terror who everyone thinks is cute, but he has M-16s and hand grenades, and he's out of his mind. His sidekick Fluffy used to be his pet cocker spaniel, but he killed him, took his brain out and put it into an 18-foot, cybernetic T-Rex. The book is pretty much about the adventures of Kid Death and Fluffy.

"*The Spring Break Special* is



"Joe's always kept those cats, in every one of his comics. It's sickening!" exclaims Palmiotti of his partner's feline fetish.

Palmiotti and Quesada are having a great time with their creation and promise it will be "just a fun comic to read from cover to cover."

out. The job is half-insanity, half-heroism, because they do get hurt all the time."

New York's firefighters will comprise a large part of Ash's ever-expanding cast of characters. "Three of the main jokers are Ashley's buddies he hangs around with," Quesada relates. "There's Bobby G, who discovered Ash when he was burned to a cinder. Bobby is the skeptic of the group,

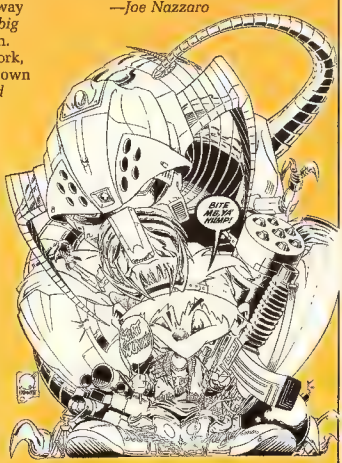
drawn by Rick Parker, who does *Beavis and Butt-head*, and is written by Joe and I. We were going to do an after-Christmas special, with Santa Claus, but we decided that *Ash* is taking up too much time, so that book is going to come out next year, and we'll put *Spring Break* out first.

"It's for a mature audience, so it's violent, but in a Warner Bros. kind of way, and sexy, but in a Tex Avery-type way. We're putting a mature audience warning on it, because we don't want to get any young readers. It's all tongue-in-cheek humor, our wise-cracking, party-type attitudes, and it has a lot of New York in it. This is a character that we can take out our frustrations with, because we *do* spoof some comics. We couldn't think of a better guy than Rick Parker to draw the book, because that's what he does on *Beavis and Butt-head*. I'll actually be inking Rick, so it's going to be a lot of fun. It's a nice story, and we'll have a few guest pin-ups in it. I have no idea if it'll have an audience. It's just a one-shot that we're having fun with.

"Everything revolves around Kid Death, the main character. He has his family and his sister, and in this issue his parents go away on a trip. His sister wants to go to Florida and she makes a deal with him to go to Fort Lauderdale. The book is about the trouble they both get into on the way down. Fluffy is his guardian, his *big* guardian. He looks after Kid Death. We leave Fluffy behind in New York, but somehow he manages to get down to Fort Lauderdale after all. In *Kid Death & Fluffy*, we also get to kill Joe's cats!

"This is going to be for a completely different audience," adds Joe Quesada. "Warn parents ahead of time: If you're buying *Ash* for your kids, don't buy them *Kid Death & Fluffy*! It's strictly an adult book! It's the kind of book we just have to put out, because for whatever reason the visuals for those two characters have caught on. I've had guys come up to me with tattoos of Kid Death and Fluffy! I guess it appeals to the crowd who buy the Chaos books and Lobo books. Rick is the perfect guy to draw it. We won't necessarily be doing *Kid Death & Fluffy* on a consistent basis, just whenever we feel like getting a little crazy."

—*Joe Nazzaro*



Look out Florida, this is one heavily armed kid and he's on his way south for a little spring break fun with his huge, dog-brained robot dinosaur.

Kid Death Art: By & Copyright 1995 Joe Quesada/Jimmy Palmiotti

Selected Art: Courtesy Event Comics

-- BLAZE AT THIS LOWER EAST SIDE BUILDING MAY HAVE CLAIMED THE LIVES OF SEVERAL RESIDENTS AS WELL AS --
CAPTAIN, WE HAVE ONE MAN DOWN AND ONE M.I.A. I'VE GOT TWO MEN DOING HAND-TO-HAND ON THE GROUND FLOOR.

The day-to-day life of firefighters will be portrayed in *Ash*. "As far as I'm concerned, they're the truest heroes out there," maintains Palmiotti.

because he saw this guy burn to death, and the next thing you know, he's fine. Either Bobby has to believe he's crazy, or something is up. In his eyes, although Ashley was a good friend, now he's a freak of nature, and Bobby is scared of him.

"Mike is the guy who was injured along with Ashley, and he plays an important part in the story, although we're still not sure if we're going to keep him wheelchair-bound. I'm more concerned with the people relationships, rather than superhero relationships.

"There's a character in issue #3 who I don't want to talk about too much, but he's one of the most interesting characters I've ever helped create, and I can't wait to draw him. He's nothing like Batman, but he's our dark, evening-type character. Essentially, we're talking about a do-gooder who's comprised of people on Death Row, and that's as much as I can say right now. Imagine someone so crazed or evil that at some point they're able to manifest something that's so good that it's almost angelic in perception. He's going to be the wielder of justice in our universe."

"We'll also be introducing other characters," says Palmiotti. "In issue #2, there's a character we see in Key West, who actually gets hit with a bat and explodes, and he'll eventually have something to do with Ash's future. There's also the Actor, mentioned in the background of the first two issues. He gets blamed for many things going on around him, and finally appears in issue #4. It's a slow build-up. We don't want to give away too much, because each character reveals a little bit about Ash. Anybody who's superpowered is going to have something directly to do with Ash. There's a reason why they're there, and a reason why Ash is there, and over the next year or two, we'll learn a bit more about the big picture. The big picture, which we named the company after, is called the Event."

"That's where we find out exactly what's happening," Quesada notes, hinting at the book's upcoming pivotal occurrence. "The Event, I guess you could call it, is our unification of all the heroes we're slowly developing. There are a lot of little bits and pieces, such as the guy we see in Key West, and there's another one in issue #3. There are going to be people we throw in who may look like normal people or they may look like superheroes, but there's really much more to them. I love throwing in things like that. The scar on Ashley's arm, for example; it's very important, and several issues down the road, the reader will figure out why at the same time as Ashley does."

Making *Ash* a true collaboration, the two artists are also plotting and scripting the book together. As Quesada recalls, taking on the challenge of writing and drawing their creation was a daunting, but not impossible, challenge. "Before we started this venture, we had conversations with several writers, and came up with a method of doing it for ourselves. We work on index cards, so we outline exactly what we want to happen in that particular issue, and then we take 22 index cards, number them and arrange them page by page. While we're doing that, one of us will write and the other will pace back and forth, and we'll say, 'Wait a minute, here's a great visual!' and then when I get to that particular sequence, I'll remember what I have to do there, and it's drawn pretty much as written.

"When you work with the Marvel

The Wonder Twins touch hands, Bruce Banner Hulks out and now Ashley Quinn vomits fire to transform into his heroic identity.

writers in the Marvel style, it almost grooms you to be your own writer, especially when you're working from a loose plot. You have to pace the story yourself, and right now we're giving it our best shot."

Adding to their own work on *Ash*, Quesada and Palmiotti have enlisted the help of some of the industry's finest talent to contribute a special pin-up for each issue. According to Quesada, "I've told these guys, 'Listen, aside from your pin-up page, you'll have a page or two to write anything you want, whether it's an editorial on the comics industry, your history or upcoming projects, or whether you want to tell a short story.' Barry Windsor-Smith was nice enough to write a nice little editorial about Jimmy and me, which was completely unsolicited and unexpected."

"The first two were by Barry Smith and Mike Mignola," notes Palmiotti, "and the next one is by Geof Darrow. It's great for us, because they get to draw our character, which is a lot of fun. These are guys that Joe and I are big fans of—I buy everything that these guys do. It gives a certain comradeship to the book."

So far, the co-creators are happy to report, fan response has been overwhelmingly positive. "*Ash* is the first book I've ever done where I have not received a single even remotely negative fan letter," declares Quesada. "Even when I was doing *X-*

(continued on page 64)

FULL TANK

One of Britain's most popular cult comic book heroines is getting ready to take America by storm —or more correctly, by tank.

Tank Girl, the SF action/adventure created by Jamie Hewlett and Alan Martin, is coming to the big screen. Lori (*A League of Their Own*) Petty plays the title role, with a cast that also includes Malcolm (*Star Trek Generations*) McDowell and Ice-T (*New Jack City*) as a half-man, half-kangaroo mutant known as a Ripper, with director Rachel (*Ghost in the Machine*) Talalay at the helm.

The entire project came about when Talalay saw the comic and instantly fell in love with it, according to executive producer Aron Warner. "Rachel's stepdaughter sent her the comic book from London about four years ago, and Rachel just thought it was the greatest thing she had ever seen," says Warner. "It took a long time, but she made it happen! Anything that you start from scratch takes a long time. Actually, I think it was pretty fast, given that *Tank Girl* isn't a well-known comic book anywhere but England, and has only now developed an underground following in the States. And, it's pretty outrageous. That, to me, is the greatest thing in the world—that the studio has taken a real chance on such an outrageous project, a totally new superhero that no one has *ever* seen the likes of before."

Warner says *Tank Girl* will undoubtedly be compared to other post-apocalyptic films like the Mad Max movies, but it is very different from any other genre film.

In the post-apocalyptic deserts of the Southwest, they're making "Tank Girl."

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

"It's much funnier than the other movies are," says Warner. "Tank Girl is basically a person who takes control of the world around her in whatever way she sees fit, and in whatever outrageous, irreverent ways she can. That's the number one difference. This movie is also *not* about the technology. We have a great deal of technology in it which is inherent to the story, but it's not like some movies that end up being about special FX, technology and things like that. This is a movie that's supported by great FX, but it's not *about* FX. It has a very solid story and straightforward characters."

Tank Girl sees its heroine begin a revolt against the evil Department of Water and Power. "Basically, Tank Girl survived the destruction of most of Earth by a comet when she was a child," says Warner. "She grew up on what was left of the streets and got very smart very fast. We pick her up as she loses the one family she has come to have, and they're not even relatives —just people she's ended up living with. The Department of Water and Power—the only remaining corporation—controls all of the water in what remains of Australia, and she goes and gets revenge. She goes back to get her

All Photos: Suzanne Tenner/Copyright 1994 United Artists Pictures Inc.

You've defeated the bad guy. You've secured water for the free world. Your makeup is impeccable. Tank Girl, its Miller time—smoke 'em if you got 'em.

Yeah, I know she's got a gun leveled at your eyes, but can you really take a girl with a Barbie head earring seriously? If she's the lead of *Tank Girl*, you had better.

surrogate daughter Sam, and she enlists the help of mutant kangaroos called Rippers.

"Malcolm McDowell plays Kesslee, the ruthless head of DWP; he goes through a number of transformations and becomes both more and less than human—some pretty weird things happen to him, much of it because of Tank Girl, and he ends up getting more and more angry and obsessed with her. She's so strong that she can take on 20 of his men, not just because she's intelligent, but because she knows how to get out of difficult situations, and she just does so over and over again."

With the hundreds of comic book properties available today, an offbeat British series may not seem like the obvious commercial choice for a film, but Warner says that *Tank Girl* is truly unique.

"To me, she's a one-of-a-kind feminist superhero," says Warner. "There's no such thing out there today! To work on a movie that you know is *totally* different from anything being made makes every day and every scene exciting."

In casting *Tank Girl*, the filmmakers encountered problems when the actress originally cast in the lead role (Emily Lloyd) balked at shaving her head for the part, and in a rather well-publicized decision, brought Petty in to take over the role. Warner says they're extremely delighted with Petty, though the casting experience was...interesting.

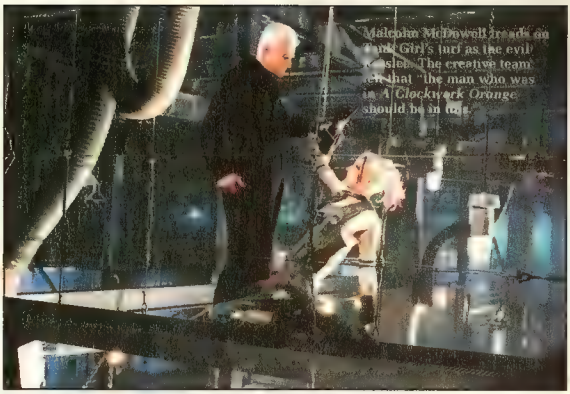
"It was difficult," Warner laughs diplomatically. "We're extremely, extremely happy and thankful that Lori is here. She is the *perfect* Tank Girl. She's tough and strong and smart and beautiful and funny—she is the right person to be playing this part. Not that many people could pull it off, and have the stamina and strength to make it through this kind of shooting. Every day she shows me more bruises! Between her and the guys in four hours of Stan Winston's makeup, I have a great many actors to calm, but she's fantastic. She has an amazing attitude, and she'll do pretty much anything to get the shot!"

McDowell was a casting coup, notes the producer, and one which has paid off very well. "We went after him straight away," says Warner. "We really liked the idea of him in the part. He has a wonderful history as an actor, and has been in some of the most outrageous, wonderful films ever made.

"She is the perfect Tank Girl," says producer Aron Warner of Petty. "She's tough and strong and smart and beautiful and funny."

Rachel thought that the man who was in *A Clockwork Orange* really should be in this movie, because you might, at some point, be able to compare some aspects of this movie to that one. And Malcolm's wonderful in the part; he's truly evil, but also funny, smart and clever."

You're supposed to take showers to get the sand *out* of all those nooks and crannies—not put it in.



Malcolm McDowell treads on Tank Girl's turf as the evil Kesslee. The creative team felt that "the man who was in *A Clockwork Orange* should be in this."

Tank Girl has plenty of action, but it isn't *only* an action flick. "In many ways, it's much more of a comedy than an action film," Warner says. "It's a movie with really cool characters that you've never seen before. The action isn't secondary—it's integral to the story, but we have a really nice balance in the movie between hilarious scenes, some pretty harrowing moments with Tank Girl and some great action sequences. There's a nice balance among the three. Of course, if we had $100 million, we would probably have 12 more huge action scenes in there!"

Action films with really strong female characters are rare, and *Tank Girl* has a heroine who can hold her own with male action stars. "That aspect appealed to all of us," explains Warner. "This isn't an action film in which we've simply replaced the lead with a female—this is a movie about a woman hero. It's not like taking *Die Hard* and putting a woman in the Bruce Willis role. This is very much her story. That appeals to me, and, I think, to everybody here."

Petty certainly finds the heroic aspects of *Tank Girl* appealing, and has enthusiastically embraced the role, not balking at getting her head shaved to more closely resemble the four-color heroine.

"I read the comics, and I think she's funny, great and sexy and smart!" says Petty. "It's a comic book, so that's another fun thing about the movie. There are no rules—we can be as crazy and insane as we want to be!"

Petty says the moviemakers have done a great job adapting the comics character to the big screen. "It's extremely close to the comic," she declares. "Jamie Hewlett comes to the set and hangs out with us, and he's really happy about it. But, everybody's interpretation of the comic is going to be different."

The star admits that despite her love of *Tank Girl*, she isn't a longtime comics fan. "I have friends who are into comics and I've seen some of their stuff, but I never really got into them," says Petty. "I'm still working on the classics!"

Petty is full of praise for director Talalay, who instantly fell in love with the series and got the project underway. "Rachel's so fun—she loves *Tank Girl* so much that she bought the rights to it!" says Petty. "This is her dream project, and here she is on the set, making it come true. She's really happy, and wants everything to be right. She's really passionate about it. It's her project, she wants it so bad—it's not like she's doing this so she can go on and do another movie.

"She's very specific about what she wants, and that's great! I love to know exactly what we're going for, and she knows. At the same time, she gives me tons of room to ad-lib and act crazy within the character. I don't know when she sleeps! We work a six-day week, and I'm sure she works eight days a week."

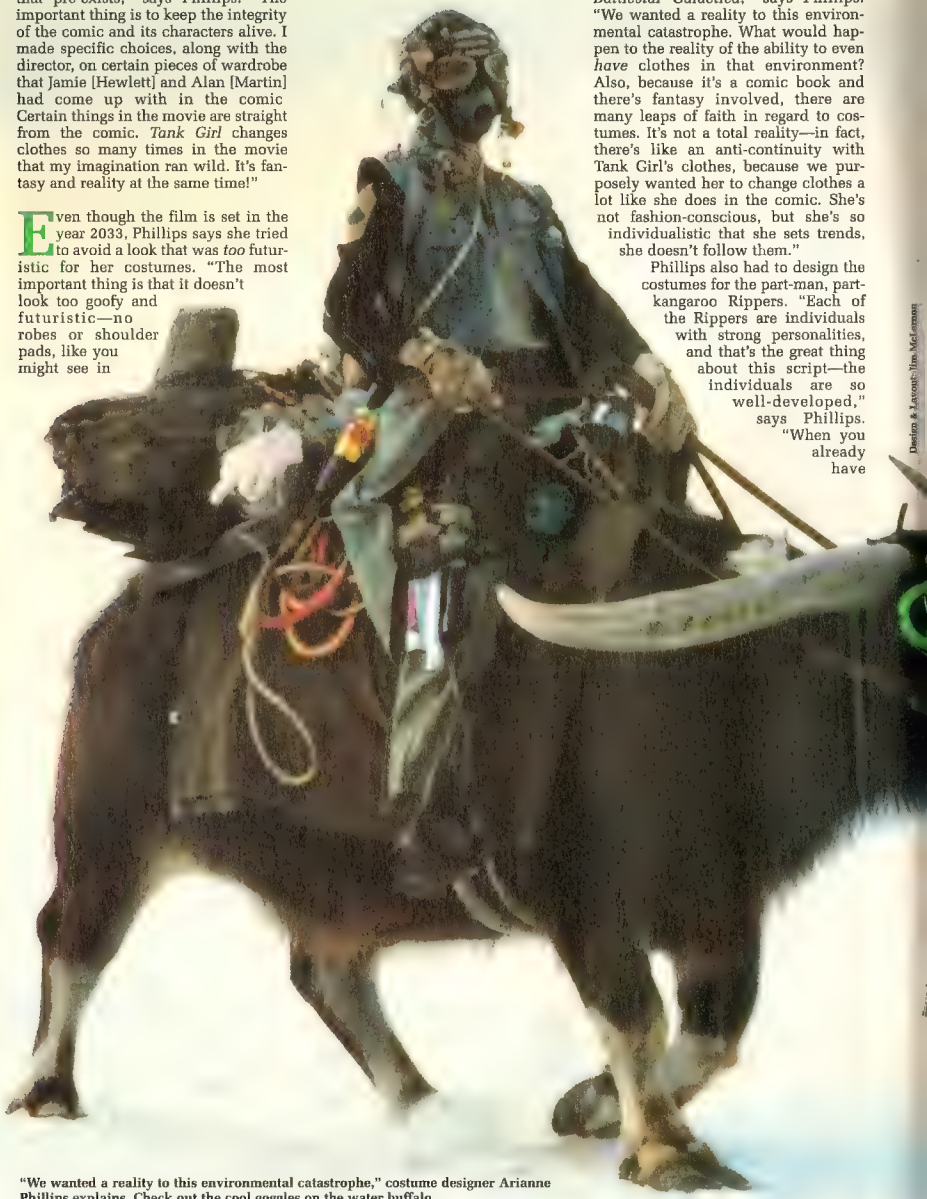
Also enthusiastic about *Tank Girl* is costume designer Arianne Phillips, who previously worked on another comic book-inspired movie, *The Crow*. "The great thing about working on movies that are derived from comics is that you already have so much reference and inspiration from something

that pre-exists," says Phillips. "The important thing is to keep the integrity of the comic and its characters alive. I made specific choices, along with the director, on certain pieces of wardrobe that Jamie [Hewlett] and Alan [Martin] had come up with in the comic Certain things in the movie are straight from the comic. *Tank Girl* changes clothes so many times in the movie that my imagination ran wild. It's fantasy and reality at the same time!"

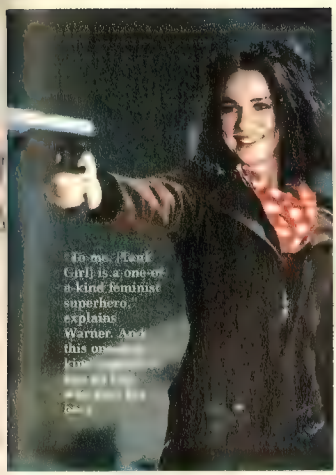
Even though the film is set in the year 2033, Phillips says she tried to avoid a look that was *too* futuristic for her costumes. "The most important thing is that it doesn't look too goofy and futuristic—no robes or shoulder pads, like you might see in *Battlestar Galactica*," says Phillips. "We wanted a reality to this environmental catastrophe. What would happen to the reality of the ability to even *have* clothes in that environment? Also, because it's a comic book and there's fantasy involved, there are many leaps of faith in regard to costumes. It's not a total reality—in fact, there's like an anti-continuity with Tank Girl's clothes, because we purposely wanted her to change clothes a lot like she does in the comic. She's not fashion-conscious, but she's so individualistic that she sets trends, she doesn't follow them."

Phillips also had to design the costumes for the part-man, part-kangaroo Rippers. "Each of the Rippers are individuals with strong personalities, and that's the great thing about this script—the individuals are so well-developed," says Phillips. "When you already have

Design & Layout: Jim McLennan



"We wanted a reality to this environmental catastrophe," costume designer Arianne Phillips explains. Check out the cool goggles on the water buffalo.



a good script and the characters are so well-developed, the clothing falls in line. It gives you more inspiration and more to draw and act on."

Phillips notes that the filmmakers are having a blast trying to transfer Hewlett's vision to the screen. "Everything I chose from the comic book was essentially *Tank Girl*, and sometimes drawings don't work in reality," says Phillips. "All of Jamie's artwork translated perfectly—not only wardrobe, but to props and makeup. There's a base, a foundation to build on with Jamie's comic. I'm in the middle of building a missile bra, which is lifted straight from the comics! It might be a little more difficult than I think, but it'll be interesting!

"The most important thing for the costume designer is to work closely with the director, the production designer and the cinematographer in coming up with the look and making choices, such as the color pattern. We all work together to create a feeling, and that's something that I learned from working with top-notch people on *The Crow*. I'm inspired by the sets, too, which helps me to come up with a really stylized look and to make real strong choices. But for me, there's no translation.

"I understand Tank Girl. She's about my age, and all of the influences and references in the comic are part of my pop culture background. I've always been inspired by British street fashion, so for me, this is the *best* opportunity I could ever hope for in working in a realm I understand so perfectly. The first thing that attracted me to *The Crow* were the musical influences in the comic, music I grew up listening to, and *Tank Girl* just takes that even further! I can relate to her because she's a woman, and her attitudes are right up my alley. It's great to be working on a movie that has a great deal of humor and life to it. *The Crow* was obviously hard to work on, especially at the end, but it was also a very dark movie. This isn't, which is a relief, and it's also a much bigger movie—I had to build over 200 costumes for the military and work on people like Malcolm McDowell."

The designer has nothing but praise for the stars she is costuming. "Malcolm is one of the most generous, sweet, forthcoming, wonderful human beings I have ever met, hands down," says Phillips. "Lori is so wonderful and so supportive. Whenever I would talk to her, she would say, 'You're the designer, you're good at what you do!' And that's great, because I'm a young designer and it's only my fifth movie. My whole heart and soul is into this. It's great—I could never have dreamed up a more perfect project!"

Tank Girl is striving for a post-apocalyptic, futuristic/primitive look, according to production designer Catherine Hardwicke, who's responsible for the look of *Tank Girl*'s tank, fliers and all other vehicles, in addition to the movie's sets. She says the production is keeping her constantly busy.

"All of the vehicles are big challenges, because we're creating a look for them," Hardwicke says. "We have this whole set called the War Room. It's in an enormous building called the Concentrator; it's one of the biggest sets and technically difficult. There are maps and things that get shot up. There's also the Liquid Silver set, the whole bath house is pretty wild with all of the future sex girls. We're shooting in an old abandoned mall. There's an underground bowling alley—it just keeps going and going and going!"

Hardwicke is particularly happy with a house the film crew actually buried in the desert, which is being used for exterior scenes. "I'm proudest of the farm house that we buried out in White Sands Monument, New Mexico," says Hardwicke. "It was this old rusty house of corrugated tin, all Victorian-style with a turret, buried in this gorgeous white sand—I loved that the most."

Although the comic book series is set in Australia, most of *Tank Girl* is being shot in Arizona, much of it near an open pit mine near Tucson and a desert near White Sands, New Mexico.

"I had more to do with choosing the locations than most production designers do, because when I went to my interview, I took some photos of Tucson," Hardwicke explains. "I had a picture of the Titan missile silo, and I said, 'This is in Tucson.' At that time, I thought they were going to shoot in Australia, and I was looking forward to working in some glamorous location. They thought the photos I had for reference looked pretty interesting, so they started investigating Tucson and

Tank Girl and Jet Girl (Naomi Watts) do some pretty weird things with their free time—like bowl with half-man, half-Kangaroo Rippers?

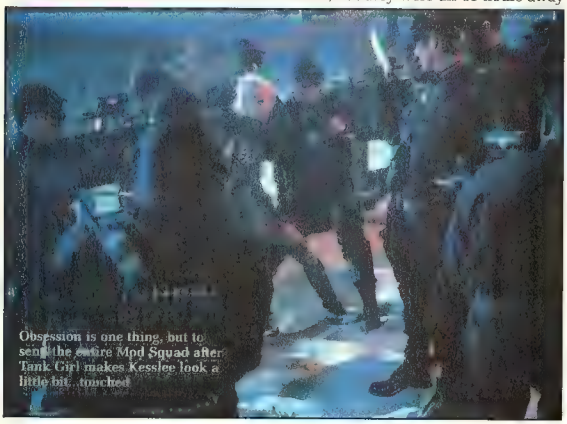
"Lori has done all her own stunts so far," says stunt coordinator Walter Scott of his spandex-clad leading lady. "We could make a stunt person out of her!"

If there's anybody who knows how to mess over the establishment, its Tank Girl's British creators Jamie Hewlett and Alan Martin. Suck barrel, baby!

Tank Girl Art: Jamie Hewlett/Deadline

that's where we wound up! I went on a lot of pre-scouts and found places. We heard about this open pit mine, and I said, 'What are those little metal buildings there in the background?' They said they were shacks that we could blow up, but I wanted to see inside them. When we looked inside them, they were amazing and radical! We're shooting entire huge scenes inside them!"

Talalay notes that they did consider shooting in Australia, but it would have been impractical for a variety of reasons. "Aron went and scouted Australia," says Talalay. "He came back and said there were six great locations, but they were all 10 hours away from each other, and we just felt that logistically, it would be incredibly difficult. We're also trying to make the movie more universal, and not make a big deal about the fact that the comic book was originally set in Australia. We found this mine, and where we would have to travel two days between each location in Australia, it's all right here for us in this one location, and it's an hour away from any piece of equipment we could ever want in L.A.



"We were also looking for sand dunes to go with the anti-water angle. White Sands just has a much different look. There are only so many Sahara-like sand dunes, and White Sands just has a very different look from other sand dunes. It's shocking and gorgeous, it's all white with incredible vistas, so you get thunderstorms coming in and a rainbow on the other side. It's like another planet! I liked it there a lot. It was very, very hot when we were there, and I thought it was going to be hell, but it was an amazing place."

I'll keep the kid gloves on, I swear. C'mon Richard (Brian Wimmer), get back in bed—or do you prefer...Dick?

"There are no rules," Petty maintains, "we can be as crazy and insane as we want!"

Loyal fans of *Tank Girl* will be pleased to hear that the character is basically staying the same for her transition to the big screen, despite some fine-tuning to create an accessible, commercially viable film.

"The comic book creators have made an effort to make her an anti-hero in a way, but in doing the movie, we've had to make her into a hero *and* an anti-hero," says Talalay. "That's probably the finest line we've had to walk. It's a very cult, underground comic book that we're trying to keep the essence of, but we're also trying to make a mainstream movie. That's a hard one to negotiate! I first saw *Beavis and Butt-head* at a midnight animation festival, and if you had told me they were going to be on MTV next year every night, I would have thought you were out of your head. It's the same challenge. Mike Judge managed to keep the essence of *Beavis and Butt-head* and take it out of the midnight milieu, and that's what we're working to do as well.

"I think the fans are going to be pleased at how incredibly well it translates. I had Jamie [Hewlett] here last week. He came up to me every three hours to say it was the greatest flattery he had ever known, and he discovered new directions to take her in. That's incredibly rewarding for me. When you get the creator on the set, you always imagine them going, 'What have you done?!' "

Talalay agrees that there are hardcore fans who will be dissatisfied if *Tank Girl* becomes the commercial success they are hoping for, but she isn't worried that many fans will charge her with selling out.

"After the first *Nightmare on Elm Street*, there were always people who said the sequels weren't as scary or hardcore," says Talalay. "Still, the audience doubled for the later films when we went for the humor, starting with *Nightmare 3*. We were satisfying many more people, but there were still the hardcore fans who said we ruined it. It's a fine line, you can't satisfy everyone."

Tank Girl is keeping stunt coordinator Walter Scott extremely busy with the film's many action sequences, including those that feature the tank itself. "I'm still not familiar with tanks!" laughs Scott. "We only have the one tank. I've done some war movies where I was around tanks a little bit, so I know that they're basically like a Caterpillar tractor. We have a good tank driver, and he handles the tank—we talk about what we're going to do with it, and he knows what it can and can't do, and we make it work. I never really worked with a tank before, especially one that had a girl crawling all over it!"

One of the biggest challenges Scott faces is choreographing the climactic battle, which includes the Rippers bounding through the air as they fight.

"We have these guys here in the costumes, having to look out of all these little helmets and be able to jump and move and use their tails, and still be able to flip in the air and get some height," says Scott. "We're prepping the battle for those guys, because they don't have guns—they fight these troopers with their bare hands, and they have machine guns and a lot of firepower."

The star of the show has been active in filming the action scenes, and Scott notes that Petty is working *without* a stunt double. "Lori has done all her stunts so far," says Scott. "She's real good, real easy to work with, very receptive to what we're telling her. She wants to take care of herself, and so do we! It works hand-in-hand."

Noting her athletic ability, he jokes that she could probably come to work for him. "We could make a stunt person out of her!" laughs Scott. "But, she told me she doesn't want to be a stunt girl. She said, 'No, I'm gonna be an actress, *you* do the stunts!' "

As *Tank Girl* prepares to join the recent wave of comics projects on the big screen, its director notes that it wasn't the comic book aspect of *Tank Girl* that drew her to the project, but her love of the character and the story.

"Certainly the visuals are there," says Talalay. "And her attitude. She's a dream come true, in that you always wanted to tell the school principal where to get off, but you never did it. *Tank Girl* would do it, and she would do it better than you would ever have been able to do it, with more style and more aplomb than one could have mustered. I think that attitude is what we were trying to get on screen.

"I wasn't looking to make a comic book movie *per se*," concludes Rachel Talalay. "That was incidental. I respond to some material and not to other material, and I responded so strongly to *Tank Girl* that I *had* to make this movie!"

C.A.T.S. for Kids

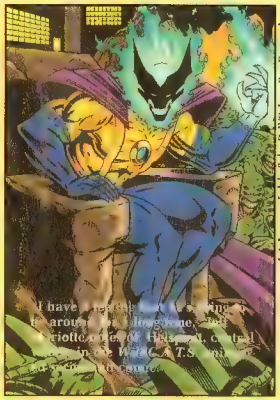
Jeff Mariotte brings the TV WildC.A.T.S. back home to the comics page.

By ANDY LEE

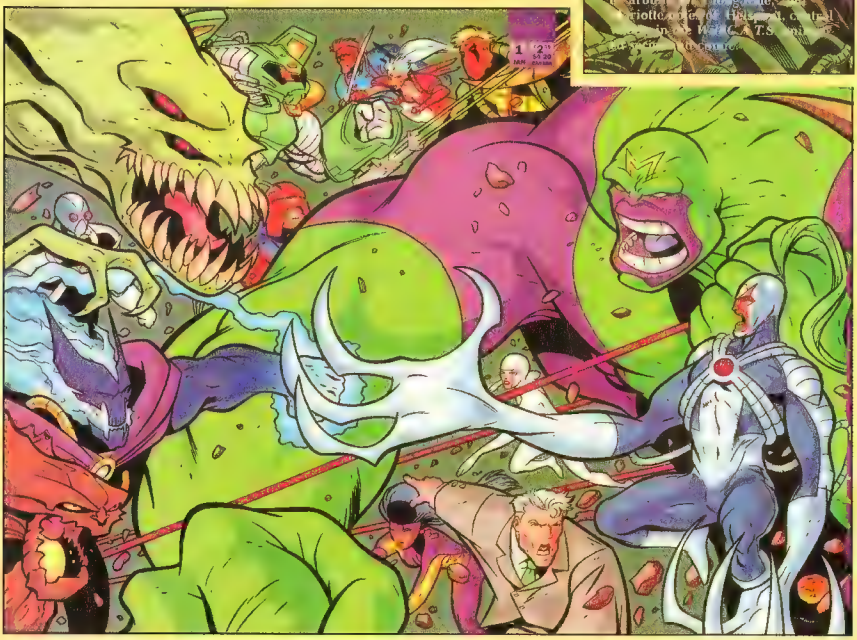
At Wildstorm Productions, Jim Lee's studio, Jeff Mariotte wears many hats. Usually, Jeff is busy managing all the tasks as Marketing Director, working on legal, trademark and copyright issues, or answering letters for the letter columns of *WildC.A.T.S Adventures*. In his spare time, he freelance writes Wildstorm trading cards and source books, co-writes *Backlash* with Sean Ruffner and scripts *WildC.A.T.S Adventures*, the adaptation of the Saturday-morning cartoon based on Lee's creations.

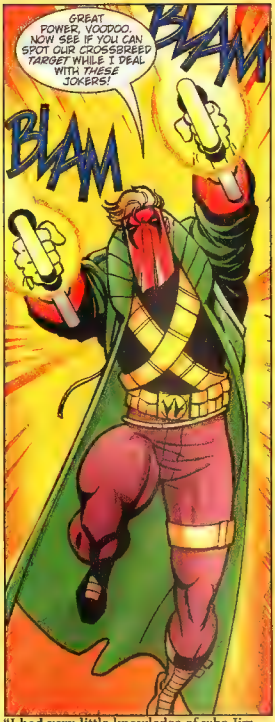
A 15-year veteran of the retail book business, Mariotte first encountered Lee's work through an employee of his, who just happened to be Lee's wife. "At the time, I had very little knowledge of who Jim Lee was," he says. "I had been a collector of comics in grade school, high school and college. I had pretty much gotten out of them in '74. I didn't pick them up again until probably 1990, so there were 15 years of comics that I missed. The company that I worked for was a small bookstore chain in California. The recession hit southern California pretty hard and the company, which was based in the Bay area, decided it would consolidate its resources there and closed down all of its southern California stores. I was out of a job.

"I had been, during that time, a writer—doing some fiction, some journalism and non-fiction. Angie, Jim's wife, knew that I could write and I guess mentioned it to Jim. Jim called



Art: Norman Felchle/John Dell/Colors: Ben Fernandez





Art: Ty Templeton/Art Nichols/Colors: Ben Fernandez

"I had very little knowledge of who Jim Lee was," admits Jeff Mariotte, who joined the artist's Wildstorm Productions as a writer and marketing director.

me up pretty much out of the blue and said, 'I have this trading card set that Topps is doing and we need text. Would you be interested in trying to write this?' Knowing little of what I was getting myself into, I said, 'Why not?' and gave it a try. Jim liked what I did and had me do some other stuff which became the *WildC.A.T.S Sourcebook* and the *Stormwatch Sourcebook*. I was still trying to work part-time then and get my own bookstore, Mysterious Galaxy, a specialty store that I now own, off the ground. Wildstorm kept putting more and more work on my desk and finally said that I pretty much had to work full time. So now I'm working full time and then some."

Part of that work is co-writing *Backlash*. Mariotte describes the process of creating the title each month: "For *Backlash*, Sean Ruffner, Brett Booth and I get together and talk

T[illegible] WildC.A.T.S. have made the jump [illegible] doubt. Of the first-season ratings, Mariotte says, "they go up [illegible] down.

Series Copyright 1994 Nelvana Ltd

Art: Ty Templeton/Ben Fernandez

"Most of what I do is condensing two or three scenes into one," reveals Mariotte of his work adapting the TV episodes to comics.

about what the plot is going to be. Brett doesn't like to draw from a written plot. He just likes to have it in his head, know where he's going to go and then draw it. We'll talk about the storyline, decide what main events are going to happen and Brett goes and draws something that may or may not resemble what we talked about. Sean does the script's first draft from those pages and then I take his draft and do a draft over his."

Mariotte's writing process is quite different for *WildC.A.T.S Adventures*. Since the comic is an adaptation of the cartoon show, Mariotte works from scripts or videotapes of the shows. "Initially, I adapted the stories straight from the scripts, because I had to start writing the comics before there were any episodes," he explains. "At a certain point, the show caught us and passed us. I started being able to see episodes before I plotted the books."

While Mariotte prefers to adapt from the scripts, the process is full of surprises. "Episode #6, the Mr. Majestic episode, turned out to be completely different on the air from the script I had been given," he says. "I had begun plotting it, and then I watched it and everything in the episode was different. So, that one I had to pretty much do from just watching it on tape, which is much more complicated. I prefer to work from the script when I can, and I have to *simplify* it.

"They cram an awful lot of stuff into a 22-minute episode. That much non-stop action doesn't work in a comic book. The pacing is completely different. I have to get rid of scenes. Most of what I do is condensing two or three scenes into one. Sometimes I have to create new scenes to bridge from here to there, because there are three fight scenes in the TV show and it doesn't work that way in the comic."

Occasionally, Mariotte gets the chance to fix story problems in the TV yarns. "In a few early episodes, they have these plot problems, where things just should not have worked the way they did, and I have the opportunity to fix it. As an example, in the first episode of the TV show, Maul picks up Helspont in his fist. Maul could just pop him on the head, smash him flat. There would be no more Helspont. The whole thing would be over and the WildC.A.T.S

In addition to his marketing duties and scripting *WildC.A.T.S.*, the busy Mariotte also co-writes *Backlash* with Sean Ruffner.

Art: Brett Booth/Regla

would be successful. But, Maul just lets Helspont go. So in the comic, I was able to keep Helspont at more of a distance."

The WildC.A.T.S themselves are also different in animated form. The cartoon show targets a younger audience than the original comic (CS #30). The *WildC.A.T.S Adventures* comic exists in a different continuity; as Mariotte explains, "The *WildC.A.T.S Adventures* Universe is a slightly skewed alternate from the Wildstorm Universe. Not everything that we see in the show or in the *WildC.A.T.S Adventures* comic is going to have a reflection in the regular comic. There are complete contradictions in some cases. In *WildC.A.T.S Adventures* and the show, Warblade is the last member to join the team. In the regular *WildC.A.T.S* comic, it was Voodoo. In the regular series, Warblade was orphaned by Daemonites, who killed his parents, which never happened in the show."

Helspont is the show's main villain. In the regular Wildstorm Universe, Helspont is apparently dead. With the cartoon in full swing, can Helspont's return to the regular *WildC.A.T.S* title be far behind? "We never saw a body. He'll be back soon," Mariotte reveals. "I don't know if we're going to kill him again. I have a feeling he'll be around for a long time. I think his big comeback is in the Wildstorm crossover which occurs in May."

The differences between the cartoon universe and the comic book universe prompted Wildstorm to produce the *WildC.A.T.S Adventures Sourcebook*, written by Mariotte and drawn by various artists. The *Sourcebook* features a special wrap-around cover by *Bone*'s Jeff Smith. Wildstorm is also producing a *WildC.A.T.S* trading card set for younger audiences to accompany the comic book and the cartoon.

Mariotte believes this new, younger audience is having a great reaction to the 'C.A.T.S. "The response that I've seen has pretty much echoed the regular comic. They really like the WildC.A.T.S. and Helspont as the villain.

There are raves for Karillion, who is exclusive to the TV show and was created by the TV writers. Taboo showed up a couple of episodes ago. She's a personal favorite of mine, because I helped create her and I gave her her name. I was glad to see her in the show. I would like to see more done with Taboo in the future."

Mariotte is especially fond of Taboo, a character he helped create. "I would like to see more done with her in the future," he states.

Design & Layout: Jim McLernon Art: Joe Phillips/John Dell/Colors: Ben Fernandez

She has absolutely no interest in reading the other books. I think it's because of the cartoony artwork and the simpler stories."

As younger readers enter the new audience affords Wildstorm the opportunity to try some new and different projects. One of them, targeted at young readers, is the *WildC.A.T.S Gang Special*, a comic to keep kids from joining gangs. The subject matter is quite serious and takes on an all-too-prevalent problem through the eyes of Grifter and a young boy.

"The gang special is a project that we're doing in conjunction with the San Diego Police Department," explains Mariotte. "It'll be distributed in San Diego school systems and we're hoping that it will get noticed and distributed nationally. Norman Felchle is drawing it."

OKAY, YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE NONE OF THE WEST SET. 'CEPT LUTHER, AN' HE'S JUS' A WANNABE.
SO YA KNOW WHAT'S AFTER YA?
SURE. HENRY THINKS SMOKIN' ME WILL GIVE HIM A REP.
I FIGURE, MY TIME COMES, I COMES. TILL THEN, I'M DOWN WITH MINE AND THEY'RE DOWN WITH ME. THAT BOY DON'T HAVE A CHANCE.
LET ME USE YOUR PHONE, RANGS. I MAY NEED SOME HELP WITH THIS ONE.

Art: Norman Felchle

In order to bring some authenticity to the *WildC.A.T.S. Gang Special*, Mariotte spent a tense night with a police gang unit.

Mariotte did some dangerous research for the assignment. "For the gang special, I went out with the San Diego Police gang unit one Saturday

I'LL GET LARGE AND SEE WHAT'S GOIN' DOWN!
NO TIME FOR THAT, MAUL! GET ME UP THERE NOW!
YOU'RE THE BOSS, SPARTAN!
ONE FASTBALL, SPECIAL COMING UP!

Art: Ty Templeton Art Nichols/Colors: Ben Fernandez

If you too would like to toss Spartan around, just wait, he'll be among the first of the WildC.A.T.S. action figures from Playmates.

night in August. I put on a bulletproof vest and rode around with them from 5 p.m. until 3 a.m. It was pretty intense at times. They said, 'Normally we don't let ride-alongs in the gang unit, because it's just too dangerous, but in your case, we'll make an exception.' Thanks a lot! 'He's just a comic book writer, who's going to miss him?' "

The jury is still out on a second-season pick-up for the animated *WildC.A.T.S.* Mariotte says there are some problems with the show's ratings. "They go up and down. For a while there it was looking good and then we were pre-empted for four weeks in a row, which couldn't have helped. There were 30 cities that did not get the show, and we tried generating letter-writing campaigns in some of those cities. Some of them responded pretty quickly. Indianapolis, Orlando and Detroit picked up the show. Almost none of Texas can get the show for some reason."

If there is a second season, viewers may see more Wildstorm characters in the cartoon. Other Wildstorm forays into animation are possible. "We're definitely talking to people about *Stormwatch*, *Gen 13* and oddly enough, *The Kindred*—minus Grifter." *Gen 13* will be a $2-million direct-to-video animated adventure, directed by *Batman* veteran Kevin Altieri (STARLOG PLATINUM EDITION #3).

Playmates is introducing a line of action figures based on the show. Mariotte's marketing acumen came into play with the toy deal. "We work pretty closely with the licensees," he says. "Playmates, for example, has in-store posters for toy stores and comic stores. We're actually producing the poster in-house for them, so we'll control what it looks like."

While Wildstorm's association with toys is not as strong as Todd McFarlane's, Mariotte reveals that Wildstorm and Playmates are working on many projects. The first wave of Playmates toys includes Grifter, Zealot, Maul, Spartan, Warblade, Helspont and a Daemonite. More toys are on the way with Void, Voodoo, Pike, Slag, Mr. Majestic and Grifter's brother Max Cash of the Black Razors. Toy fans can also expect vehicles and playsets.

The Playmates connection grows, as the WildC.A.T.S will cross-over with the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles in a comic book. Jim Lee will redesign and update the Turtles.

As for the future of the animated WildC.A.T.S, Mariotte says, "I would like to see a *WildC.A.T.S Adventures* Christmas special. I would like to see new stories in that format with the animated-style characters. I would like to see one artist stay on the book. Joe Phillips did #4 and #5 and now he's gone. Norman Felchle has turned in some nice pages for #6. It's a little bit more of a realistic look, a little less cartoony, but some really nice action stuff."

Unsure of whether he is wearing his Marketing hat or his writer's hat, Jeff Mariotte invites fans of all ages to try this title. "Readers should pick up *WildC.A.T.S Adventures* more often. They'll enjoy the book. It's a lot of fun and it's *completely* different from the TV show."

Art: Joe Phillips/John Lowe/Colors: Ben Fernandez

The comic and TV continuity will differ says Mariotte. "In the regular series, Warblade was orphaned by Daemonites, which never happened in the show."

ROADKILL

The Death Race is on-again in a new series from writers Pat Mills and Tony Skinner and Roger Corman's Cosmic Comics.

Pedestrians beware! "Death Race 2000" roars back to violent life.

One of the wildest writing teams in comics is cruising for high-octane action in a brand new series from low-budget film mogul turned comics publisher Roger Corman and his Cosmic Comics.

Pat Mills and Tony Skinner, familiar to American readers for scripting *Punisher 2099* and *Ravage 2099*, are turning their talents toward adapting a cult film for the new company.

The movie, of course, is *Death Race 2000*, the futuristic action-adventure produced by Corman and directed by Paul Bartel, which featured an America that sponsors a road race where pedestrians are targets. The 1975 New World Pictures release starred David Carradine as heroic racer Frankenstein and a pre-*Rocky* Sylvester Stallone as his antagonist. It's now being adapted into an ongoing monthly series by the British team, with art for the first three issues by Mills' *Marshal Law* co-creator, Kevin O'Neill.

Cosmic Comics editor Robert Boyd approached the British duo on behalf of Corman's fledgling company, according to Mills, and they are reveling in the assignment. "I had done *Marshal Law* for Dark Horse, and Robert Boyd [then at Dark Horse] remembered me from there," says Mills. "Because Marshal Law is obviously a kindred spirit to the characters in *Death Race 2000*, it seemed appropriate to give me a call. Certain kinds of stories really lend themselves to a treatment by Tony and myself, and *Death Race 2000* seemed a case in point.

"Tony and I have had an enormous amount of fun on it. It seems to reflect the darker sides of our souls. I think all of us have that predatory car driver inside us, whether we admit it or not. This is what's special in the original film, to acknowledge that and honor that part of us that would like to roar down the road and knock down pedestrians—or at least those people we cannot stand, whether it's mother-in-laws or skateboarders or New Agers. For us, *Death Race 2020* is the road to catharsis. It saves us from having expensive therapy!"

His partner shares Mills' enthusiasm for the mayhem of *Death Race 2020*. "We had both been fans of the film," says Skinner. "We were the right age to remember the original *Death Race 2000*, which was great! Since Pat and I do a lot of work together, he asked me if I wanted to do the project. We watched the film together, since it had been several years since we had seen it, and we read what Robert Boyd had sent down to us. To be honest, it's the kind of story we've been waiting for!"

The basic philosophy of the *Death Race* future appeals to the writing team as much as the lure of the original movie. "It's a moral thing," says Skinner. "Both Pat and I burn very hot on this. We write for quite a few different companies, both in England and

America, and whether a comic is Code-approved or not, there's a kind of modern-day Western civilization format to the good guy-bad guy moral thrust that any story must have. Speaking personally, it's largely distasteful! We both have a very different point-of-view on how life is and how it should be, and the whole of life is darker, yet more humorous, than comicland would have us believe!

"And the *Death Race* idea is fabulous. It was part of a cinematic heyday in the '70s, when all kinds of experimental things happened, like the *Emmanuelle* sex films and *A Clockwork Orange*. Films in those days were a little braver—maybe not always brilliantly well-made, but there was a freshness to some of those films that tackled different sides of things and came to different conclusions. And *Death Race* really did it. It was a lightweight, interesting thing done in a certain way. I personally loved the no-comeuppance idea it just seemed lovely to us."

"Instead of suppressing his dark side, he gets in touch with it, acknowledges it, and hurdles down the motorway," explains Mills of Frankenstein.

Cosmic Comics reflects their own sensibilities perfectly, according to Skinner. "Personally speaking, I got so sick of taking on a character, discussing it with an editor, putting in a synopsis, a proposal—it's like working on a movie. They start saying, 'Can the hero be more sympathetic? Can the bad guys be badder? Can the bad guy go for his gun?' It doesn't suit where

citizens are ungrateful because he has banned the Death Race, and there's a movement to vote him out of office. There are illegal Death Races going on, and after he's kicked out of office, Frankenstein goes back to the only thing he knows, which is to be a Death Racer. In other words, instead of suppressing his dark side, he gets in touch with it, acknowledges it and hurtles down the motorway, knocking over everything in sight!"

2000 Art Copyright 1975 New World Pictures

A close look at *Death Race 2000* revealed a detailed world for the writers to extrapolate on for their new series.

I'm coming from at all, whereas this stuff does! I must say, the whole company is great to work with so far," says Skinner.

Mills says Cosmic Comics gave them the direction for the monthly *Death Race* series. "We had a take from Robert Boyd to begin with," says Mills. "Twenty years have gone by since the movie, and President Frankenstein is the leader of America. He finds his figure, Archdeacon Miskin, First Primate of Hollywood. He becomes the main enemy and eventually the next President of the United States, and wants to reinstate the holy religion. It's the old bread-and-circuses thing, mixed with an acknowledgment of the Hollywood concept. Hollywood is the new pulpit. Not many people really listen to what comes out of churches, but they do listen to what comes out of Hollywood.

"The original *Death Race 2000* had a very LA feel about it, and very much a Hollywood razzmatazz, so we explore the link between Hollywood, Church and State—which in effect becomes Holywood. It isn't just people driving around killing people. Without getting too heavy about it, there is an underlying theme, so if there are any sophisticated readers out there who want to read this kind of thing, they can pick up on that subtext. I think all of these kind of stories are best done as multi-level stories, and you can take what you wish out of it."

Mills and Skinner had to study the movie in order to determine its underpinnings and translate them to the comic book. "*Death Race 2020* is the next stage of the film, so it's kind of a sequel," explains Skinner. "We looked at the film carefully, and could almost see the film on the editor's floor. We were finding out how America had gotten to that state. There are very tiny refer-

Death Race 2020 is loaded with characters both old and new. "We felt the story needed new protagonists," Mills says. "They don't all emerge in the early issues, however, as we establish the basic conflict between Church and State. In the film, there is a Papal

President Frankenstein, the character played by David Carradine in the film, is back and desperately fighting the urge to race—and kill—again.

Design & Layout: Jim McCarron

Death Race 2020 Art© Courtesy Cosmic Comics

Who wouldn't, just once, like to hit the road and demolish everything in sight? "I think all of us have that predatory car driver inside us," notes Skinner.

ences in the film having to do with America as a fallen power, and the hated French being blamed for various things. We did what we love to do—we looked behind the whole thing, and spent about a week-and-a-half rolling over the whole backdrop and going through every area we could think of. We came to several conclusions.

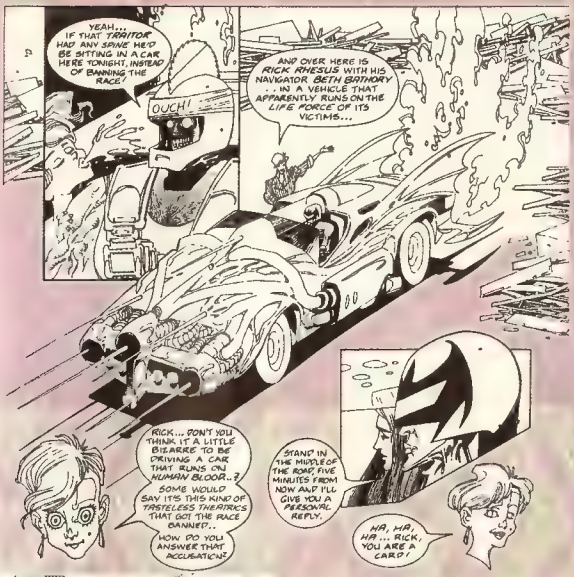
"It wouldn't be that impossible for America to fall, maybe the United States of Europe would be an economic threat. We've postulated that a new religion has come up based on Hollywood, and the nation's capitol has also moved to Tinseltown. We looked into the whole *Death Race* mythos, and made it, in our way, as preposterous and implausible as we could manage—we took that from the film. We just imagined, 'OK, there's a Death Race, it's gladiatorial, it's like the Romans—when things get bad, give 'em bread and circuses.' We thought of how the automobile is at the heart of the American culture—every successful movie must have a gunfight and a car chase.

"We took the film's elements that interested and intrigued us the most. It was pointless for us to take scenes like the famous sequence where the doctors and nurses at the geriatric hospital are all run over by Frankenstein. We extrapolated to create our own scenes, and from there it was the easiest story we've ever written. We spend our time laughing, leaping around the office, acting out bits together. Sometimes we laugh until there are tears coming down our faces. It's a great story to write, and it's really generated from the original film! The movie was much cleverer than we thought it would be, it wasn't just a series of good scenes—there's a real mythos there for us to explore. To be honest, it was that mythos that generated our story!"

According to the writers, "We're very sick people, and rather than spend money on expensive therapy, we can spill it all over the page."

The pair originally agreed to write the first three issues of *Death Race 2020*, which would set up the premise of Frankenstein's return to Death Racing. However, they were having too much fun to quit. "We *were* going to hand it over to other writers," says Skinner. "The first three stories were supposed to be *pre-Death Race 2020*, telling the story of President Frankenstein and so forth. Of course, the Catch-22 for us is that it means there would be no Death Race, so we had to invent the illegal Death Races that Frankenstein had to stop. We imagined the horror within—he had to be chained in at night as the nightmares got worse, with his desire to run people over, and his almost pathological need to be a Death Racer. Of course, we swing the whole thing around, as he's voted out of office in favor of a candidate who's pushing for the next Death Race.

"Once Pat and I finished that, we basically said goodbye to Cosmic Comics, but after a week, we phoned them and asked if we could write some more. We really enjoyed it, and so we're writing it until the fire dies! I think it has been an antidote


YEAH... IF THAT TRAITOR HAD ANY SPINE HE'D BE SITTING IN A CAR HERE TONIGHT, INSTEAD OF BANNING THE RACE!
OUCH!
AND OVER HERE IS RICK RHESUS WITH HIS NAVIGATOR BETH BATHORY ... IN A VEHICLE THAT APPARENTLY RUNS ON THE LIFE FORCE OF ITS VICTIMS...
RICK... DON'T YOU THINK IT A LITTLE BIZARRE TO BE DRIVING A CAR THAT RUNS ON HUMAN BLOOD...?
SOME WOULD SAY IT'S THIS KIND OF TASTELESS THEATRICS THAT GOT THE RACE BANNED...
HOW DO YOU ANSWER THAT ACCUSATION?
STAND IN THE MUZZLE OF THE RAM, FIVE MINUTES FROM NOW AND I'LL GIVE YOU A PERSONAL REPLY.
HA, HA, HA... RICK, YOU ARE A CARD!

A whole new cast of racers joins Frankenstein on the road, including Silver Wraith, Sawmill, Rick Rhesus and the ever-dangerous Alcoholic.

All 2020 Art Kevin O'Neill

"Only Kevin could realize that in all its full beauty!" raves Mills of artist Kevin O'Neill's rendition of the president's mammoth mobile White House.

to some of the other things we've written---totally cathartic, and it really, really suits who we are. We enjoy the stories we do for other publishers, but *Death Race 2020* has been real fresh air for us!"

Mills and Skinner are very happy with their relationship with the new company and Boyd, an editor who delights in their excesses. "This is the first time I've ever had an editor or publisher ring up and *encourage* us in our enthusiasm, and perhaps even suggest that we might go further!" laughs Mills. "Of course, we were happy to oblige. Our publisher even came up with a couple of wonderful characters, including the Alcoholic, who's totally and utterly irresponsible—he drives with a whiskey bottle in his hand, and owes a lot of his talent to the fact that he really doesn't know what he's doing!"

Once the initial story of Frankenstein's return to racing is told, future tales will center on the characters involved in the illegal races, with help from O'Neill's art. "We told Kevin what the project was about, and it's right up his alley—he couldn't resist it!" laughs Skinner.

"Kevin's artwork on *Death Race 2020* has a style that's *very* reminiscent of our work on *Marshal Law*, particularly with wild graffiti and foul extra touches that Kevin has added himself," adds Mills. "There's a mobile White House, an enormous tank the size of a multi-story building that careens down motorways—only Kevin could visually realize that in all its full beauty! It has these enormous windscreen wipers that wipe off the blood of the President's enemies as the President has his coffee in the upper viewing room. It's all over-the-top!"

Let's see, lead the country or run down old ladies? Take a meeting or crush some school kids? The burden of command weighs heavy on the President.

There is plenty of black humor throughout the entire series. "I think it does have tremendous comedic possibilities," Mills observes. "When we looked at the film, we found that the essential soul of the thing is still intact, and there are some tantalizing possibilities for further extrapolation—take for instance, the French. Tony lives in France and has his own take on the French, and so we were able to indulge a little in our various prejudices. See, the French were the enemies in the original *Death Race 2000*, and there are constant references to the 'hated French.' We didn't have too much trouble picking out why they would be so hated! When we tell our French friends about it, they smile, but the smile is a little icy around the edges!"

Death Race 2020 also has a wide range of major and minor characters who will be appearing throughout the series. "The first issues feature a strong emphasis on Frankenstein himself," says Mills. "Granny Paine—who is Thomasina Paine from the film—is still around. She's 110 years old, and she's a disembodied head living in a tank of nutrients. Annie, Frankenstein's beloved girl friend, is the First Lady, but there is tragedy lurking over the horizon."

Mills agrees that the Death Race is not quite as central to the new series as it was to the movie. *(continued on page 64)*

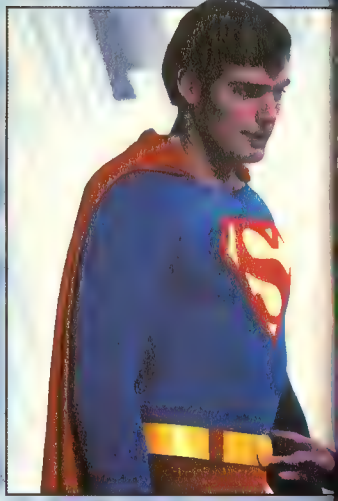
SUPERMAN NO MORE

"I certainly wouldn't do another *Superman* again for any reason, at any time," says Christopher Reeve, ending all discussion of the subject.
JURGENS
Art: Dan Jurgens/Joe Rubenstein

Christopher Reeve is absolutely certain. He won't fly again as the Man of Steel.

By IAN SPELLING & DAN YAKIR

Despite the shaky ratings earned by TV's *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman*, there has been much talk about reviving the long-dormant *Superman* film franchise. If that talk does indeed become a reality, don't count on Christopher Reeve—who made his big-screen debut in the



Superman Photos: Trademark & Copyright 1978, 1980, 1983, 1987 DC Comics Inc./Courtesy Warner Bros.

original *Superman* and portrayed the Man of Steel in three sequels—to run faster than a speeding bullet or leap tall buildings in a single bound in an effort to portray the character for a fifth time.

"They should absolutely do it *without me*. I would highly *recommend* that they do it without me. I certainly wouldn't do another *Superman*, for any reason, at any time. I have absolutely no interest in doing it again, none at all," insists Reeve. "And let me explain why. I think Superman is 30 years old. I'm 42 now. I feel that every generation should have a Superman for its own time. I was the right Superman for the 1970s and the early 1980s. If they want to do it again, there ought to be another Superman for *this* time.

"The first two *Superman* films are really good and take a place in American film history. *Superman I* was class A the whole way. All of the comic book films that you see now, from *Popeye* and *Dick Tracy* to *The Addams Family* and *The Flintstones*, were really made possible by the success of the first *Superman*. Its success created, I think, the idea that actors as distinguished as Dustin Hoffman could play Hook and then go on with their careers. We took comic book and television material and made it big-screen entertainment with first-class actors, the proper cinematography and a script by Robert Benton and Tom Mankiewicz and David Newman and Mario Puzo!

"I'm very proud of *Superman* and *Superman II*. I especially enjoyed making the first one, because we were doing something that was a big departure. The third and fourth films are not as good. That often happens. You can look at the *Rocky* films or any other movie that has had a lot of sequels and make that case. But I'm very proud of having been Superman at the right time. As we go into the mid-1990s and into the next century, you must move on to someone else, plain and simple."

At 42, Reeve believes he is now simply too old to play the eternally-young Man of Steel and his alter-ego Clark Kent.

Recently, Reeve shared the screen with Michael Keaton in the romantic comedy *Speechless*, co-starring as an egotistical "Scud Stud"-like TV news reporter who was Keaton's competition for the affections of Geena Davis.

"I'm very proud of *Superman* and *Superman II*," maintains Reeve, who briefly gave up his powers to be with Lois Lane (Margot Kidder).

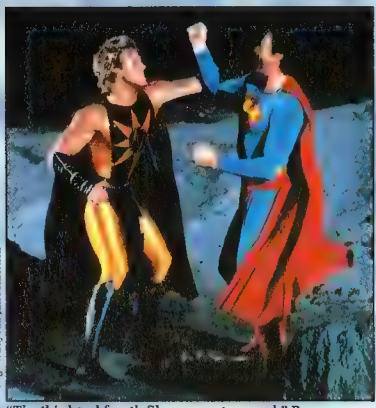
Pointing to the presence of Oscar-winning actor Gene Hackman, Reeve notes that the *Superman* films raised the standard for comic book movie casts.

Keaton, of course, had portrayed the Dark Knight in *Batman* and *Batman Returns*, but turned down the opportunity to play the role a third time (as he discussed in CS #49). Instead, *Batman Forever* entrusts the care of Gotham City to Val Kilmer. Reeve couldn't help but notice that Keaton was in *Batman* negotiations while in production on *Speechless*. "There were a couple of mornings where Michael was in his trailer doing serious phonings to various people. I would see a Warner Bros. executive come down and a CAA rep would come down [to the New Mexico set]. I knew there were big doings going on," he remembers. "But I didn't know what and it was none of my business to pry. Then, I read in the trade [magazines] that he wasn't going to do it. We all respect each other's space about those kinds of things."

Does Reeve have any advice to offer any actor contemplating tackling a role in a film based on a comic book or TV show? "I don't that think anyone needs advice. What we were able to set up in the *Superman* films was that actors with real careers, as opposed to athletes, could do these kinds of films," he explains. "The old way they made these movies was to take a Johnny Weissmuller and make him Tarzan. He was a swimmer and not an actor. The way the movies are made now is that an A-list actor like Gene Hackman will play a Lex Luthor, Dustin Hoffman, Hook and Michelle Pfeiffer, Catwoman. Many of them do it for fun, or for their children, or for the money, or as a lark, and then they go on with a regular career. That precedent was set by *Superman*. *Superman* was the laboratory test, the guinea pig, and we proved it could work. So, I have no advice for anyone.

"And I've had a lot of advice," Reeve continues. "People said, 'Listen, you're tall and good looking; just shut up and be that.' But I never found that interesting enough. And it was an option, which was open to me. All the scripts that came in after *Superman* were of the action variety that many people would kill to be in, as they come out and gross $100 million. But I said, 'No, I think I'm going to do *Deathtrap*' or, 'No, I think I'm going to do *The Bostonians*.' My agents were saying, 'No! What are you doing!' But you can only do what's *really* of interest to you. That's just the way it is, and I know of no other way to do it."

Once upon a time, Reeve co-starred with Jane Seymour in *Somewhere in Time*, a time-travel romance scripted by Richard Matheson from his own novel. Reeve portrayed a writer who falls in love with a photo of Seymour and wills his way back through the years to be with



Design & Layout: Jim McLernon

"The third and fourth films are not as good," Reeve admits of the sillier half of the series, which degenerated into stereotypical comic book bluster.

her. "*Somewhere in Time* was a bomb. It failed. It left a crater on 47th Street. I'll never forget, Vincent Canby wrote in the *New York Times* that, 'This movie does for romance what the *Hindenburg* did for dirigibles.' I think it was partly an issue of timing," muses Reeve. "When it came out in 1980, it may have been a little too sweet for the period. But it was found by people in the mid-80s as cable grew and video became a way to see movies. A few years ago, a guy named Bill Shepherd founded a group called INSITE, the International Network of *Somewhere in Time* Enthusiasts.

"I didn't think it would last a minute, but it has been going on for four years now. He puts out a newsletter four times a year. The membership is growing daily. There are thousands of members all across the country and overseas as well. Once a year, they have a reunion of people involved in the film at a hotel in Michigan [where the movie was made]. They asked me to go for several years. I was a little uncertain at first. Finally, this year, I went with my wife. We had a wonderful time. These were not 'fringe' people. They love film and particularly *Somewhere in Time*. I was really gratified. It was a big ego boost for me, actually. I have to admit that I wallowed in the experience. Chances are, if I walked down the street right now, more people would come up to me and talk about *Somewhere in Time* than *any* other film I've made. I'm absolutely serious about that. I just think there's a hunger for romance and *Somewhere in Time* was an unabashed romance."

Reeve will next be seen along with Kirstie (*Cheers*) Alley and Mark Hamill (CS #44) in a remake of the classic 1960 thriller *Village of the Damned*, which itself was based on John Wyndham's SF novel *The Midwich Cuckoos*. The film was directed by John Carpenter, whose numerous genre credits include *Halloween*, *Escape from New York*, *Big Trouble in Little China* and, most recently, *In the Mouth of Madness*. "I don't know why I resisted science fiction for so long. I had always been a bit leery, a little standoffish about it. But I got to work with John, who is a master of that genre. He has a great deal of affection for the old movie.

"I play the George Sanders part, the doctor in the small town [where newborn children grow up to be cold-blooded killers]. My own daughter is the ringleader of a group of alien children that takes over the place. They're still editing it, so I don't know how it will come out, but I think we did a pretty good job.

After all these years, Reeve doesn't feel trapped by his alter-ego. "Superman created many opportunities for me."

"I have yet to make a film where I'm just bored by the acting challenge," maintains Reeve. "I try to avoid those parts. Many times in the action genre, you feel it could be just *anybody* standing there: all you've got to do is run, or leap. But I try to make something out of it. Even in *Superman*, I thought, 'Well, the opportunity is here—it's a light style, but you fool around with being two people, you fool around with this guy who's a sort of alien. It's not just straight on 'look nice and be athletic.' "

Returning to his many years as *Superman* (which he discussed eight years ago in CS #1), Reeve says he'll always be grateful to his one-time alter-ego. After all, the role and the films helped him launch his career, which has encompassed such films as *Street Smart*, *Noises Off* and *Remains of the Day*. The only thing Reeve says he might consider changing when it comes to his *Superman* experience, is that he would rather have played the part *after* having had several other films under his belt. In that way, he would have avoided being thrust right into the spotlight.

"It's easier if you already have a track record of diversity and *then* you play a comic-book part. I did it the other way around. It made it harder for me, but *Superman* created many other opportunities for me, too. The way this business works," Reeve explains, "is that you have a success and it gives you more roles. *Superman* created *Deathtrap*, for example. [Director] James Ivory said that he cast me in *The Bostonians* because he liked *Superman*, not *in spite* of it.

"The only downside is that sometimes the media is lazy; it's easy to throw back. It happens to everybody: you look at Sean Connery's distinguished career, and the night he comes out to get his Oscar for *The Untouchables*, they play the 007 music for his entrance. That's just rude and disrespectful. You can't control that.

"You can only hope that people come every time with a clean slate to watch your work, because certainly we, as performers, come with a clean slate every time. If you don't allow a performer to start from scratch, I think you're wasting your seven dollars. If I've just watched Gene Hackman play Lex Luthor and then I go see a screening of *Unforgiven* and I'm not willing to start over again, then I've missed a brilliant performance. This applies to any actor, not just me, so I don't feel unfairly victimized. If some people aren't willing to imagine what I could do beyond this character, well, I can't be responsible for that.

"We're even at the point now, to be honest with you, where you would have a very hard time convincing some small children that I even played Superman. A mom will say, 'Look Bobby, it's Superman!' and the kid goes, 'Nah, I don't think so.' That's interesting. We've come full circle in that regard," Christopher Reeve says, "and that's fine with me." CS

Hallowed Be Thy Grave

As Preacher ministers to a new flock, Garth Ennis explores the War Between Good and Evil.

By JOE NAZZARO

Preacher is a wild, funny, disturbing ride through the nastier side of life," says writer Garth Ennis of his new series for Vertigo. Featuring a young Texas preacher who's imbued with a powerful spiritual force, his ex-girl friend and would-be assassin and a 100-year old party-loving Irish vampire, the book promises to be one of the darkest adventures in contemporary comics.

The idea for *Preacher* really began when Ennis and artist Steve Dillon were winding up their long collaboration on *Hellblazer*. "We knew when our last issue was going to be," the writer elaborates, "we were looking for some sort of replacement and Vertigo wanted us to do something new as well. After about a year's worth of deliberation, looking at various scenarios and coming up with ideas and rejecting them, the one that appealed to me the most was the idea of a big, road movie-style story, set in America. That doesn't mean that we're constantly on the road, but it does mean that we have the scope to move all over America, and even further abroad. From there, I worked out the story's basic concepts."

All Preacher Art: Steve Dillon/Copyright 1995 DC Comics, Inc. Painted Art: Glenn Fabry

As Ennis relates, *Preacher* kicks off in a dusty, backwater Texas town called Annville. "There's a young Baptist minister there named Jesse Custer, who serves this very small Texas township. There are only about 200 people living

"He's an absolute scumbag, a really nasty, white-trash, evil, racist, bigoted sheriff," says Ennis of Hugo Root, the cop who wants Preacher's sacred hide.

Tulip and Cassidy join Preacher on a mission from God in Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon's new series from Vertigo.

there, and it's really out in the sticks. Jesse is having a fairly miserable time being the minister there, because, most of the people in town don't care much about him or the church. Jesse had some sort of wild past before family influence was brought to bear, and he ended up having to be a minister, but we'll learn more about that later.

"Jesse is probably in his late 20s, but he has been a minister for the past five years, and that's the situation we find him in when he's struck in the first issue by a spiritual force called Genesis—the offspring of a demon and an angel; a neutralizing force in this eternal war between Heaven and Hell. It gives Jesse two things: first of all, it gives him his power, which defines him as the Preacher, and that is the power to be obeyed as if he was speaking the Word of God. That means if he tells you to stand on your head, you'll stand on your head. If he tells you to cut your own throat, you'll cut you own throat. This is a power that he'll make *full* use of. All it requires is his willingness to use it. There's no way to resist it.

"The other thing it gives Jesse, which he slowly uncovers, is the true secret of everything there is to know about this ongoing war between Heaven and Hell, and the plans that both agencies have for Earth and the people on it. That's what really gives Jesse his mission and sets him off across America on—I don't want to give it away too early, because we don't really find out until issue #4 what he's doing and who he's looking for. I suppose you can call it a spiritual quest for God, taken *very* literally. That's where we start with Jesse, and go on from there."

Joining the newly-empowered Jesse are two characters who will both have major roles in *Preacher*. "The second main character is a girl called Tulip O'Hare," Ennis explains. "She harks back to Jesse's wild youth, in that she was his girl friend for quite some time, but she hasn't seen him in five years. He seems to have dumped her and left her in the middle of nowhere.

"Meanwhile, Tulip has found employment as an assassin, but she's hopelessly inadequate at it, and is in the process of bungling her first job, when she runs into our third character, who will eventually become a good friend of Jesse's—a guy named Cassidy. He's an Irish guy who's just drifting around America, but it turns out he has been a vampire since 1916, when he fought for the Irish Republican Army. Ever since then, he has really been using the invulnerability his vampirism gives him, and the agelessness, to have one long party.

"That, for me, has always been the attraction of vampirism. I've never really liked the idea of vampires, to tell you the truth; they're all either angst-ridden types or good-looking youths like in *The Lost Boys*. The one vampire story I really liked was *Near Dark*, because they strip the vampire mythos right down, and there's none of the crosses/garlic/stakes stuff. There's just sunlight, and they drift around, eating what they want when they need it, and having fun.

"Anyway, it's only by running into Cassidy that Tulip will eventually come face to face with Jesse again, and that sparks off a whole new area of antagonism between them. She's annoyed at him because he won't explain why he ran out on her five years ago and became a Baptist minister. He's annoyed at her because she won't tell him why she has become an assassin and is running around Dallas, trying to shoot people. That is, in fact, a big part of the story, the extremely antagonistic relationship between Jesse and Tulip."

The early issues of *Preacher* will focus mainly on Jesse and his sometime companions, as their respective paths continue to converge and separate every month. "The book is constructed in story arcs, with the occasional one-shot story, and what I'll be doing is moving the characters around the States. Cassidy will pop in and out of the book, because he's not bound up with Jesse the same way that Tulip is. She's determined to find out why he left, while as far as Cassidy is concerned, he's just out for fun. If his particular happy trail coincides with Jesse and Tulip, then fine. If it doesn't, he'll just stick around wherever he is for a while, and rejoin them later. They'll pretty much stay together, and in each story arc, we'll meet another set of characters."

The Saint of Killers is the deadly enforcer recruited by the agents of Heaven to get back the power of Genesis from Preacher.

In addition to his protagonists, Ennis will be introducing a fairly strange group of supporting characters. If nothing else, they should make for an eclectic group of *Preacher* action figures.

Tulip O'Hare, neophyte assassin, was once dumped by Preacher. She's back in his life and her background will be featured in later issues of the series.

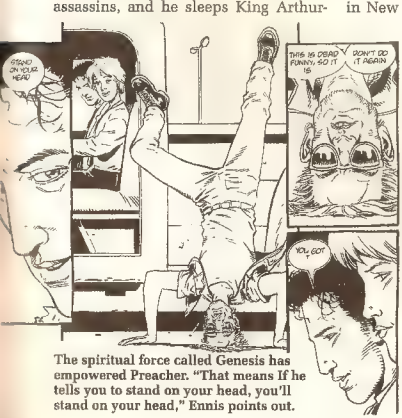
"There's a guy called the Saint of Killers, the main villain of the piece. Once Genesis possesses Jesse—maybe 'possesses' isn't the right word; it's really an idea, and a lot of information wrapped around a huge amount of power, so it's not as if a new personality takes Jesse over; he's just suddenly given this power. Anyway, once Genesis takes him over, the agents of Heaven are determined to get it back, because the fact that it's running loose would seriously upset their grand scheme, and they send the Saint of Killers after Jesse and his companions. He's the patron saint of murderers and assassins, and he sleeps King Arthur-like beneath Boot Hill until he's called upon.

"Then, there's Hugo Root, the sheriff of the area in which Jesse's town lies. He's an absolute scumbag, a really nasty, white-trash, evil, racist, bigoted sheriff. I believe there are still one or two of them left. He gets on the wrong side of the Saint of Killers very early, because he tries to stop the Saint from walking down a particular stretch of highway after Jesse, and the Saint massacres 10 or 12 of his officers. Hugo decides that not only is he going to get Jesse for kicking this whole thing off, but he's going to get the Saint as well, which turns out to be a big mistake.

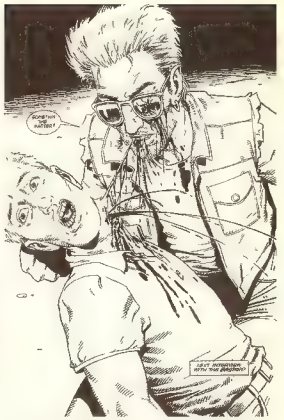
"We also meet Hugo's son, whose real name we never actually learn, but he's referred to as Arse Face. He shot himself by putting a shotgun under his chin and letting go, but the only thing he succeeded in doing is removing his face, not his head—which, I'm told, is just about possible. Arse Face is the kind of son that Hugo would really like to get rid of if he could, but unfortunately, Arse Face is determined to be the perfect son. He'll eventually end up playing quite a big part in the story, and he'll be looking for a little revenge of his own on Jesse and the Saint."

Beyond his initial story arc, Ennis drops a few tantalizing hints about future issues of *Preacher*, and some of the unusual characters appearing. "Starting around issue #5, we move up to New York, where we meet John Tool, the unluckiest cop in the world, and his partner, who's like the ultimate clichéd perfect cop; he never gets anything wrong, but he holds a dark secret of his own. We also have a serial killer on the loose, and he's unusual in that he manages to mix serial killing and a rather dark brand of stand-up comedy.

"Taking us up to the end of the first year, Jesse and Tulip will leave Cassidy in New York, and go back to Texas to confront Jesse's family. We find out that his grandmother is this awful, incredibly powerful matriarchal figure, who has been trying to control his life all along. She has done dreadful things to him, keeping him locked up on this farm in Texas until he was 15, and she and her cohorts schooled him in all sorts of dreadful ideas. In fact, we find out that she had his parents murdered, and in this storyline, we find out the secrets of both characters: what happened to Tulip and why she became an assassin, and we'll also explain why Jesse had to leave her and become a minister, and it's all tied up with his grandmother.



The spiritual force called Genesis has empowered Preacher. "That means if he tells you to stand on your head, you'll stand on your head," Ennis points out.



"He's just out for fun," Ennis notes of Cassidy, his hedonistic Irish vampire whose idea of fun includes taking a bite out of rednecks.

"Beyond that, we'll be meeting the Grail, a secret society devoted to protecting a bloodline that has been in existence for 2,000 years. They're very interested in the war between Heaven and Hell, and the bloodline of the person they're protecting has a big part to play in that particular war. There's the Gomorrah People, a secret society dedicated to the pursuit of perversion in all its forms. Those are the two stories that will take us into our second year. I certainly have the characters worked out, and I find if you have the interaction between the characters sorted out, the storylines will follow along pretty quickly."

As with many books in the Vertigo line-up, *Preacher* will be more visceral in nature than the standard comic book fare. "To be honest, it'll be as graphic as I can make it," declares Ennis, never one to shy away from controversy in books like *Hellblazer*. "That's not because I want to do that for the sake of making it graphic, but for me, the great thing about Vertigo is that the gloves are off. Obviously, there are a few areas we have to be careful of, but basically you can write about *any* subject and portray any story, in whatever way you want. That is the most important element for me: to push the boundaries. Here I am, in a situation where I can write about subjects that interest me, and I don't have to hold back while I'm doing it."

Ennis will also be exploring what was one of the biggest taboo subjects in comics, namely organized religion. "One of the most interesting elements of *Preacher* is its religious aspects, and

Design & Layout: Jim McLarnon

Hugo Root's son's botched suicide attempt left the boy hideously disfigured, "He'll be looking for a little revenge of his own," Ennis promises.

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OKAY, HUGO. THANKS FOR YOUR TIME. WE'LL GET YOU KNOW AS SOON AS ANY OF THESE SUSPECTS ARE SIGHTED.

When the Saint of Killers massacres Hugo Root's men he ends up with the tenacious Sheriff on *his* trail.

the fact that you get all this great iconography to play around with. If you're talking about the Christian religion, you have some great guest stars to play with. You have the angels and various saints, you have the demons, and of course the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, who are always a popular trio.

"Certainly, the first four parts have

Ennis previously worked with Dillon on *Hellblazer* and the pair were anxious to team again. "I can write to his strengths," maintains Ennis.

quite a bit to do with religion, but that really just sets up *Preacher* as it goes on. I suppose the underlying points the book has to make are all to do with religion and faith, and its abuses, but I wouldn't want people to think that's what it's all about. Certainly the rest of the first year—the New York storyline and then Jesse's childhood—have very little to do with religion. They're more to do with expanding the characters a bit and getting them out there."

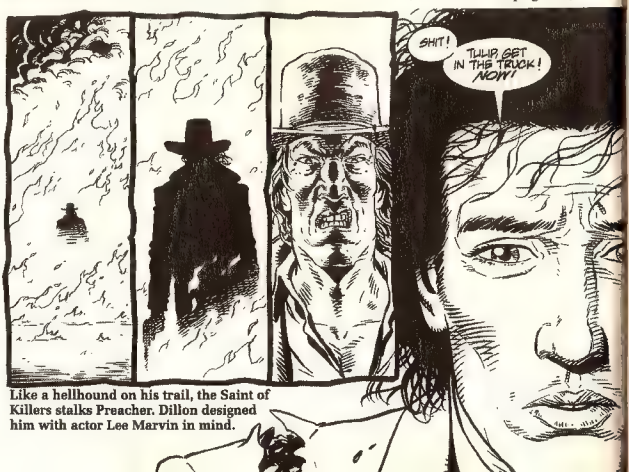
According to Ennis, the struggle between good and evil, which provides the backdrop for *Preacher*, will grow stronger as time goes by. "It's interesting that you see Heaven and Hell, good and evil, because around episode three, Jesse is finding out more and more about the big secrets, and he says something like, 'Heaven and Hell, good and evil; I'm not quite sure if they're the same thing.'

"One of the things we find out in *Preacher* is that Heaven and Hell have more to do with the difference between Order and Chaos. The people in Heaven are more interested in Order, having laws and rules and strictures, and more importantly, people keeping to them down on Earth, whereas the people in Hell are more interested in having a good time. The trouble there is if you're having too much of a good time, other people can get hurt. These elements are always there in *Preacher*, but they're certainly *not* there at the story's expense."

For Ennis, one of the more enjoyable aspects of working on *Preacher* is collaborating with his former *Hellblazer* artist Dillon. "We're doing it together because we work so well together," notes the writer, "and it has gotten to the point where there's minimal interference from one to the other. Steve knows I'm not going to mess him around too much or ask him to draw the impossible, and I know roughly what he's going to draw so I can write to his strengths. It's almost like telepathy, where you know what the other person is going to do. You know they're going to do a great job on it, and at the same time, you know you're not going to get any nasty surprises.

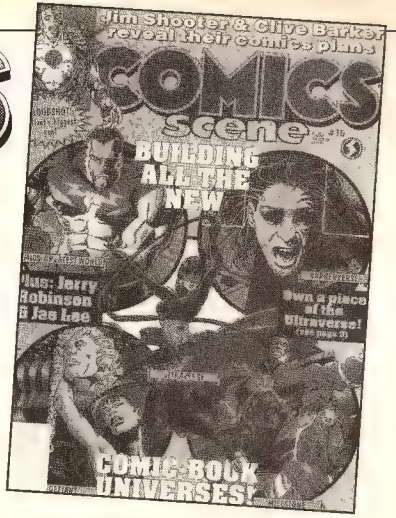
"For the most part, Steve is happy to

(continued on page 62)



Like a hellhound on his trail, the Saint of Killers stalks Preacher. Dillon designed him with actor Lee Marvin in mind.

COMICS Scene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THE ART OF MURDER

Rick Geary takes us to the scene of the crime as he follows the bloody trail of Jack the Ripper.

By MICHAEL STEWART

The Victorian Age was an especially delectable one for murder," Rick Geary has written. As an artist known for his whimsical style and gently skewed humor, who himself describes his work as "wholesome," Geary's preoccupation with the blackest of crimes may seem shocking. But, since the beginning of his career, he has returned again and again to chronicling the intricate surfaces of Victorian society and the dark passions that lie beneath. Now, Geary has embarked upon his longest and most comprehensive work to date, detailing the brutal crimes of the 19th century's most notorious and elusive murderer, Jack the Ripper.

"It's pretty much a straight-faced, factual accounting of the case," says Geary of his new 64-page graphic novel published by NBM, simply called *Jack the Ripper*. "I wrote it in journal form. Supposedly, it's a journal written by a person at the time who was observing things as they happened. I've described him as an armchair detective. He has contacts within the police force where he gets information not available to the public at large. I wanted to give it an immediacy, give it a sense of happening right now, through someone who's right there on the scene. We get the information as soon as he does.

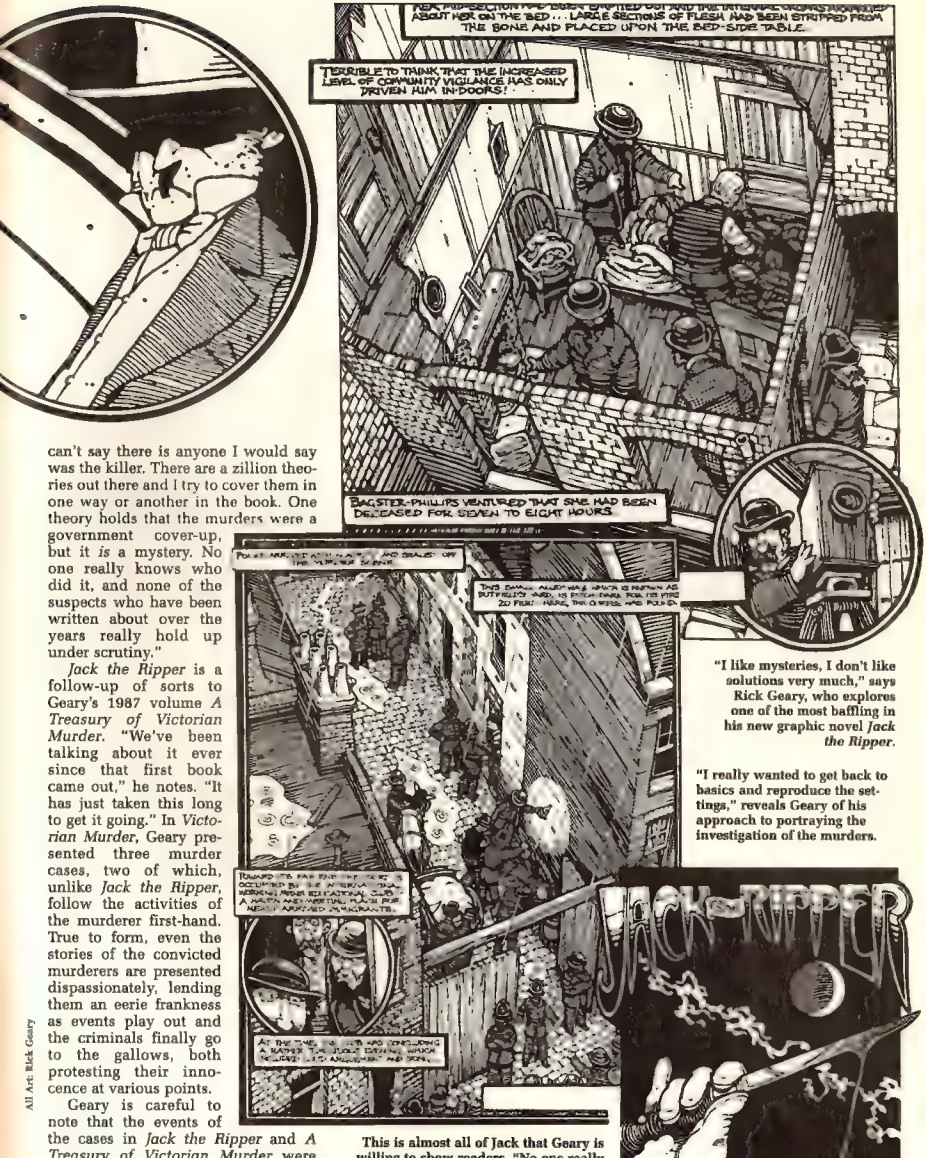
"I've tried to be complete. I consulted all the literature that's out there, as well as some of the newspapers of the time. It has pretty much all the known information. All the reports from the *London Times* are available in reprinted form, and many books have been written about the case over the years, most of them since the '50s. Recently, there has been a flurry of volumes because a lot of the coroner's reports and other items that are in the police file were only made public in the last few years. Writers have been given access to them before, but they're generally available now, all the medical reports and things like that."

"I was never a comics reader as a kid," notes Geary, whose unique work exhibits a wider range of influences.

The detailed nature of this new information, as well as his natural interest in the facts of the case, led to Geary's matter-of-fact approach for *Jack the Ripper*. "I really wanted to get back to basics and reproduce the settings. I was just asking myself what *I* would want to see if I was looking for a Jack the Ripper graphic novel. I would want to put in a lot of maps and charts and overhead views of the crime scenes, things like that, to put it all in perspective. There are certain details about the murders themselves that were kind of new—some gruesome details. But I don't try to be exploitive, although in *Jack the Ripper* for the first time I've drawn guts and blood. There's some forensic detail and views of the actual murder scenes, things like that which get to be a little graphic. There are photos available, so I've tried to be as authentic as possible."

The Jack the Ripper case has captivated mystery buffs ever since the original crimes in 1888. Innumerable theories have been put forward as to the killer's identity, filling a succession of books, movies and articles on the subject, but Geary does not count himself among those who clamor for sensationalistic speculation. Since he first began creating comics detailing the facts of murder cases, he has been content to present the crimes with a detached impartiality, leaving the readers to draw whatever conclusions they will.

"I like mysteries," Geary avows. "I don't like solutions very much; I'm real happy with it being a mystery. I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BAGSTER-PHILLIPS VENTURED THAT SHE HAD BEEN DECEASED FOR SEVEN TO EIGHT HOURS
JACK-RIPPER

can't say there is anyone I would say was the killer. There are a zillion theories out there and I try to cover them in one way or another in the book. One theory holds that the murders were a government cover-up, but it *is* a mystery. No one really knows who did it, and none of the suspects who have been written about over the years really hold up under scrutiny."

Jack the Ripper is a follow-up of sorts to Geary's 1987 volume *A Treasury of Victorian Murder*. "We've been talking about it ever since that first book came out," he notes. "It has just taken this long to get it going." In *Victorian Murder*, Geary presented three murder cases, two of which, unlike *Jack the Ripper*, follow the activities of the murderer first-hand. True to form, even the stories of the convicted murderers are presented dispassionately, lending them an eerie frankness as events play out and the criminals finally go to the gallows, both protesting their innocence at various points.

Geary is careful to note that the events of the cases in *Jack the Ripper* and *A Treasury of Victorian Murder* were widely reported in the press of the day. "No detail was too insignificant, no

"I like mysteries, I don't like solutions very much," says Rick Geary, who explores one of the most baffling in his new graphic novel *Jack the Ripper*.

"I really wanted to get back to basics and reproduce the settings," reveals Geary of his approach to portraying the investigation of the murders.

This is almost all of Jack that Geary is willing to show readers. "No one really knows who did it," Geary points out, and he's not willing to speculate.

All Art: Rick Geary

What happens when Stanley Ipkiss' nephew Ned finds his magical mask? Well, this is one Christmask the boy will never forget.

Mask Characters & Art: Copyright 1994 Dark Horse Comics

Design & Layout: Michael Stewart

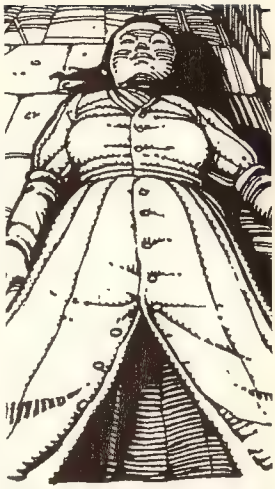
"Mike Richardson had some ideas of his own that I integrated into it," explains Geary of the Mask book's development.

rumor too outlandish to see print in those rambunctious times," Geary wrote in the introduction to *Victorian Murder*. Some of the fascination of these cases can be attributed to their reflection of the events in our own time. "When they couldn't find the facts, the press would usually make things up," Geary emphasizes. "It was an unrestrained time, as it is now I suppose. There doesn't seem to be any kind of limit to what even the mainstream press will indulge in. But I don't mind it. I don't think it's unhealthy or anything. The press should be lively and nasty and sensationalistic, just to keep things moving, to keep people looking over their shoulders."

Strangely enough, at the same time as he was illustrating back-alley slashings in Victorian London, Geary was also working on a book for children starring a very modern-day character. "Someone at Dark Horse Comics had the idea to do an illustrated children's book based on the Mask and they wanted *me* to draw it," relates Geary. The result is a delightful story called *The Night Before Chrismask*, in which Ned, the nephew of Stanley Ipkiss (star of the Dark Horse comic and Jim Carrey's alter-ego in last summer's blockbuster film), finds his uncle's magical mask and becomes a green-faced gremlin out to help old St. Nick by taking over part of his route on Christmas Eve.

Neither the violent comic book, nor the wildly anarchic movie version might initially seem like prime material for a children's book, but with Geary's track record of tackling the ghastliest of subjects with taste and humor, he was clearly the man for the job. "They sent me reprints of the comic as something *not* to follow. It's really graphic and bloody," says Geary. "They told me they wanted to do a softer version. I had seen the Jim Carrey movie, which was more like a Warner Bros. cartoon, really. I liked the way they adapted Tex Avery for some

"I wanted to give it a sense of immediacy, of happening right now," explains Geary of his use of a period narrator following the Ripper case.



of those scenes. It was fun; what more can you ask?

"Dark Horse wanted to keep the franchise going, even though they don't have ownership of the Jim Carrey character [New Line Cinema does.]; they wanted to keep the Mask going in a different form. They can use the Stanley Ipkiss name and the concept of the Mask. Someone came up with the title *The Night Before Chrismask* and it sounded real clever, and I think it might have sprung from that."

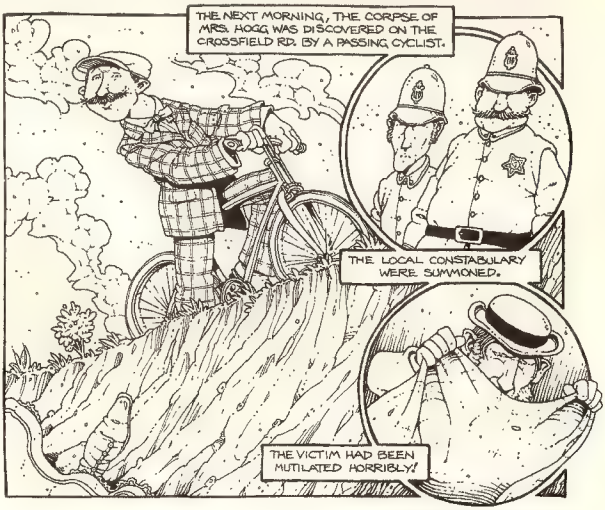
Though he considers himself an artist first and foremost, Geary has always written his own material and was happy to try his hand as a children's author. "They couldn't find anyone to write it, so they asked me," he says. "It's not something I ever set out to do, but I felt it was something I could handle, because this is a new format for the character and I didn't feel I needed to be strict and true to an already established format. I felt I could be a little bit more myself than I would be if, for instance, I was doing a Mask comic book.

"I think of myself as more of an illustrator; I never thought of myself as a hardcore writer. The writing is just something to carry the illustrations along, I guess, but that's changing a little." Indeed, Geary's written voice has always been as distinctive as his art style. A Rick Geary comic without pictures would still be instantly identifiable from its prose and dialogue, at once terse, idiosyncratic and charming. "In my writing, I sometimes try for the effect of someone who doesn't know the English language too well and maybe uses it in an overly formal way or stretches to make the connections between words in a really naive way," explains Geary.

Working on someone else's character was no problem for the artist, who was given a great deal of leeway to make the project his own. "They were willing to try just about anything and they were in a big hurry, and that can ease a lot of problems. It was the idea to have a kid from the beginning, that was part of the original idea—a kid using the Mask to become Santa Claus and take over Santa's role. I did a treatment along those lines and then [Dark Horse publisher and Mask creator] Mike Richardson had some ideas of his own that I integrated into it and it all came together. The reaction to it was very good; they want to make it a series if possible, with each book taking a different holiday or season."

Rick Geary is an original," Alan Moore wrote in his introduction to Geary's collection *Housebound*. Moore went on to note that Geary "provides a fresh and individual slant on the world and how we see it, surely the only accomplishment worth a damn in any field of the arts." One look at Geary's comics will confirm that he works from a refreshingly different point-of-view than most creators in the field. What makes his comics so novel, strangely enough, is the *absence* of comics in his background.

Geary was born in Kansas City, Missouri and raised in Wichita, Kansas. During his childhood, he never developed much of a taste for comics, apart from an early liking for Carl Barks' Disney work and a later appreciation for *Mad* magazine in its '50s heyday. He graduated from the University of Kansas with degrees in art and film and became a freelance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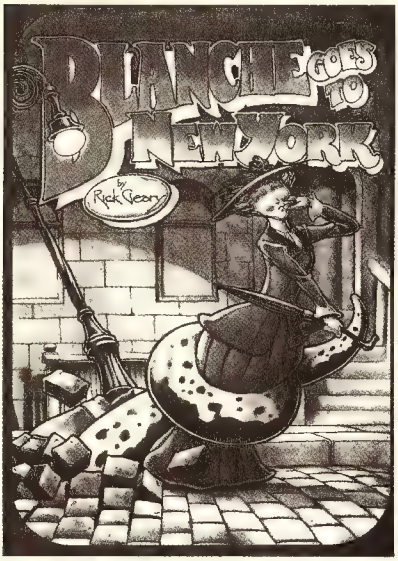
Spider-Man contends with Kraven the Hunter and the Chameleon for the fate of a rare blue tiger in Geary's upcoming children's book from Yes! Entertainment.

Spider-Man & Related Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1995 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc./Courtesy Marvel & Yes! Entertainment

illustrator in San Diego and briefly New York. "I was never a comics reader as a kid, or a collector or anything like that. When I moved to San Diego, I more or less just wanted to be an illustrator, but I fell in with this group of artists who worked with the San Diego Comic Convention. They didn't make a fan out of me, but they got me interested in comics as an artistic pursuit," relates Geary.

He drew his first comics story in 1977 with a friend, got an agent and was soon a regular contributor to *National Lampoon*, drawing short comics which celebrated the mundanities of life with an innocence and fervor. Often, Geary's characters peer awkwardly out from the confines of their panels, as if posing for a photograph. "I've tried to portray the calm surfaces of things," Geary says. "There's not much movement or action in my stories. It's a distancing device, an attempt to back away from any melodramatic possbilities in the material. I've tried to avoid the conventions of narrative, the things that move a story forward, the things people expect to be used to tell a story. I distrust those conventions and those devices. I wanted to try something new, but I wouldn't even call it conscious; when I started to play around with it, that's what came out."



The first Blanche volume is based on Geary's grandmother, but "she didn't really encounter a big tentacle coming out of the Earth," he says.

By leaving the conventions of storytelling behind in his early work, Geary found himself outside the usual boundaries of the comic book industry. "I don't feel part of any movement or subgroup of comics," he maintains. "I'm not part of the underground and I'm certainly not part of the mainstream. I have pals who are more or less a part of the underground, alternative comics scene that I see every year, but I don't have that sensibility, that desire to shock, to do wild and crazy things. The underground was a reaction to all those years of mainstream comics. Many creators I know got into comics as a reaction against Marvel and DC, but I don't have that to react against."

Still, Geary has recently begun to turn his peculiar vision toward longer stories that are, at least on the surface, more conventional. "I feel I have been moving in the direction of longer pieces. I find that more to my liking these days, and I think it was doing the *Classics Illustrated*s a few years ago that got me into that—developing a story over a longer period of time."

Known for his facility with the 18th-century milieu in which so many great novels are set, Geary was one of the first artists chosen for the revived *Classics Illustrated* line in the late '80s. "I did *Great Expectations* first as part of their initial package, and then somewhat later I did a couple of others—*Wuthering Heights* and *The Invisible Man*. *Wuthering Heights* more or less got assigned to me because they were well into the series and they realized they hadn't done a novel by a woman yet. The approach I took was to preserve as much of the original language as possible; I tried to be very respectful of the sources. The challenge was to re-create the dramatic elements. You have to make characters' expressions a little more extreme than I usually do, but I felt real confident and I found it very comfortable to work under those strictures."

Geary's success with the *Classics Illustrated* adaptations gave him the confidence to attempt his first full-length original comic, *Blanche Goes to New York*. "That was the longest story I had done up to that point, 32 pages. I

(continued on page 62)

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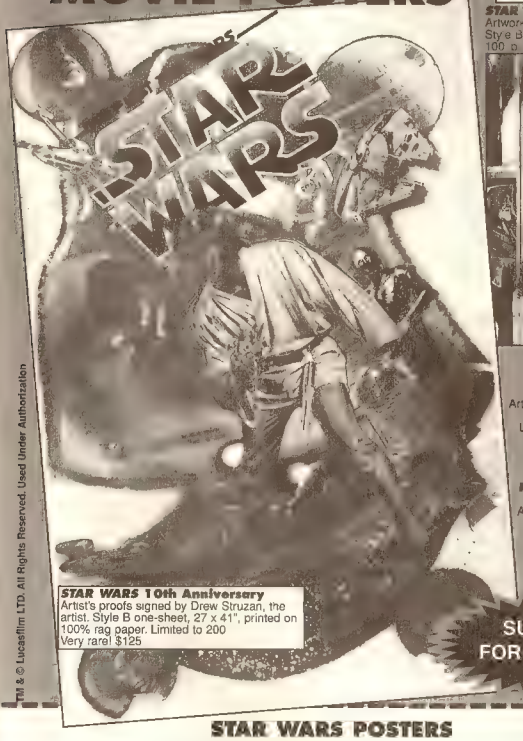

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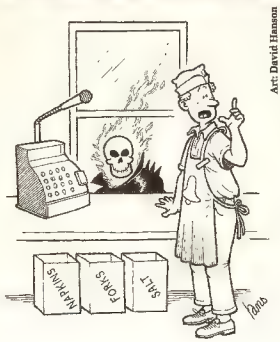

Art: David Hanson

"Uh, the customer would like extra hot sauce, Joe. Now don't forget, OK?"

Preacher

(continued from page 54)

let me push the story along in whatever direction it's going, but he does ask questions, and he's interested in how things are developing. The look of the characters and the book is almost entirely up to him. The Saint of Killers, for instance, was supposed to be based on Clint Eastwood, but Steve read the character description and thought more along the lines of Lee Marvin. The result is a compromise, which in fact looks very effective.

"From what he has told me, Steve loves the storytelling aspect of drawing comics. He's not really interested in what's fashionable at the moment-huge splash pages everywhere, and bad storytelling. He likes the idea of his art being used to tell the story, and he talks about it in terms of getting the script and being like a movie director; putting people in the right place and choosing the right angle to shoot from."

In addition to *Preacher*, Ennis has a number of other projects in the offing, including a possible return to *Hellblazer* sometime in the future. "I've just been given the OK by DC to do a new ongoing book for them called *Hit Man*, " Ennis explains, " That's for the regular DC line, and it's a story about an assassin, set in Gotham City. He's a hired killer, and I suppose the book will interact closely with the rest of the DC Universe characters.

"Apart from that, there's a three-part *Legends of the Dark Knight* that Will Simpson is drawing; *Goddess* is at last going to see print sometime in 1995; John Higgins and I might be doing a Judge Dredd story for *Legends of the Law*; and Steve and I will also be doing a one-shot called *Heartland*. It's actually set in Belfast, featuring John Constantine's girl friend. She was a very popular character in *Hellblazer*, and we felt we should really finish her story.

"In 1996, it might be time to have another go at *Hellblazer*; maybe a short story. It's an idea I've been kicking around, and Steve likes it, so maybe we'll do it the year after that."

In the meantime, Garth Ennis is working hard to make *Preacher* the kind of offbeat and unpredictable book that Vertigo readers will definitely enjoy. "I would say that if what Steve and I were doing on *Hellblazer* appeals to you, then give this a go. It has the same sense of humor, it has good characters and a good storyline, which is something I hope we always provided on *Hellblazer*. Generally, this should be a cracking good read. It's not some labored, purple prose-ridden monstrosity. It's a good, fast storyline, with plenty of amusing, *nasty* stuff going on!"

Geary

(continued from page 60)

was pleased that I was able to marshal all the different elements together. Blanche is actually based on my grandmother. She was a young girl from Kansas who went to New York to study music. I just took off from there, but it's pretty fictional—she didn't really encounter a big tentacle coming out of the Earth. That was another of my schemes to be more commercial; 'If they want a monster, I'll give 'em a monster.' "

A sequel, *Blanche Goes to Hollywood*, sent Geary's heroine to the West Coast to establish a music department for a burgeoning movie studio. The story brings Blanche into contact with such notables of the silent film era as D.W. Griffith and Charlie Chaplin and is set against the backdrop of the early labor disputes that shook the young industry. "There's a little historical commentary in there, but I didn't want to make it a central concern, it's just whimsical," notes Geary.

Blanche Goes to Paris, a third chapter, has been written and may be released in a collection with the first two once it's completed. Geary, who chafes at the limitations of the comic book marketplace, hopes a nice hardcover edition of the Blanche stories, like *Jack the Ripper*, will "look like a real book that they can send to book reviewers, and will have a place on bookshelves beside real books. Anything with adult content, and I don't mean necessarily sex and violence, but content that isn't SF/fantasy or superheroes, has a very hard time in comic book format. That's just the way things got started in this country."

He can only wait and see if *Jack the Ripper* finds its audience, but in the meantime, Geary has another Mask book in the works, *The Mask's Summer Vacation*, and has begun a similar children's book project starring Spider-Man for Marvel Comics and Yes! Entertainment. 'He's a lot more relaxed than many of these other guys. My style seems to adapt well to that, at least so far," Geary says.

As for his own comics work, Rick Geary will continue to do the kind of projects that appeal to him. "I've often thought I should somehow make my work seem a little more contemporary," he admits, "but I wouldn't know the first thing about how to do it. I've always been a little amazed that people read my stuff, and I guess I've been pretty lucky in that I've been able to divide my work between comics and commercial illustration. Between the two of them, I've been able to make an OK living."

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Death Race

(continued from page 47)

"There are the usual race elements. In issue #1, we have all of the people we would like to see run over get it, for instance. We have a vampire character who runs over skateboarders; his hatred of youth street culture is legendary! My personal favorite is inspired by the movie scene in the geriatric hospital, where all the geriatrics are lined up. We had to do something similar, so the riders head toward the euthanasia center for the aged and terminally infirm. This place is run by the Sisters of Pity, an order founded by that legend in her own lifetime, Mother Tracy, renowned for her selfless devotion to the sick. I dare not say if there's any similarity to anyone living or dead, but if you can picture an old crone-like nun waiting to be canonized, the Death Races help her on her way! My favorite scene is when she turns and raises a crucifix at Rick Rhesus, vampire driver.

"Issues #1 through #3 establish the scene, the deposing of Frankenstein and the tragedy that befalls his wife," says Mills. "The race proper starts in issue #4, and Frankenstein can no longer hold back the American public from what they want. We see a whole bunch of new protagonists, including the Alcoholic, Rick Rhesus and our personal favorite, Steppenwolf—he's a defrocked Russian Orthodox priest. We say that the American Bible Belt was right to fear the Russian threat, but it wasn't Communism. It was the dark, Satanic wind from the Russian steppes, Steppenwolf!"

Death Race 2020 has been nothing if not a gratifying, cathartic experience for its writers. "On a personal note, the whole *Death Race* thing has been a vehicle to get out the stuff I've been sitting on for years," says Tony Skinner. "Pat's the same way. He gets a lot of it out in *Marshal Law*, it's true, but *Marshal Law* is a special vehicle for Pat to say very specific things. This is a chance for us to *really* get in some good stuff. When we were speaking to Boyd, he asked us where we get some of our stuff from, and we told him we're very sick people, and rather than spend money on expensive therapy, we can just spill it all over the page and get paid for it. That's where it's really, really from!"

As long as this *Death Race* continues to run, its writers will stay on board for a bloody good time. "We would almost do this story for nothing, because we've had so much fun on it!" laughs Pat Mills. "I think if and when it comes to an end, we'll suffer terrible withdrawal symptoms!"

Ash

(continued from page 32)

Factor, there were a few letters saying, 'This character sucks. Your art sucks!' but there has been nothing like that on *Ash*. I find that a bit scary, because I thrive on negative feedback. That's the only way I can gauge what I'm doing wrong and what I can do to improve it. The worst comment was from a guy who said I had a fetish about cats, but that's it. From a fan standpoint, it has been great."

Says Palmiotti, "We get letters from people saying, 'What's with the cats? Why are those cats everywhere? Lose the cats,' so everybody's sick of looking at them. Joe's always kept those cats, in every one of his comics, in *The Ray*, in *Batman* and now in *Ash*; those cats are always in the background. It's sickening!"

While the jury is still out on the fate of Ashley's ever-present felines, the Event co-creators hope that readers will pick up a copy of *Ash* and enjoy what they see. "The thing that I've said from day one is that I want to see kids or adults reading the book," notes Joe Quesada. "I don't want to see *Ash* being put into a showcase sealer. I want to see it rolled up in the back pocket of a kid's blue jeans, having been read three or four times, and then handed over to another kid. There's going to be some interesting things happening in *Ash*, and if you enjoy reading a story about people, not just 20 pages of guys punching the hell out of each other, then this is something you might like.

"Ashley is a single, young guy in New York City, trying to make ends meet. He doesn't have a girl friend; all he has is a couple of fat cats and a bunch of great buddies who like to go out and get stupid. Now, he suddenly finds himself with a dilemma of, 'Jesus, what do I do with this?' I want Ashley to be Joe Everybody, and hopefully the readers will relate to him. They'll also understand that we're putting every effort and every dime we have into this book, and we want to make it the top book in the industry. We're not out to compete with Marvel or DC. We're out to co-exist and have a great time."

"What we offer is the best artwork that Joe and I could possibly do," adds Jimmy Palmiotti. "We're not going to give you a chromium cover and then charge you $4 more for the book, telling you that it's more collectible. It's not going to have 18 spin-offs, and it's not going to have characters with claws or a gun. It's the kind of book you can throw in the corner when you're done, instead of bagging—just a fun comic to read from cover to cover."

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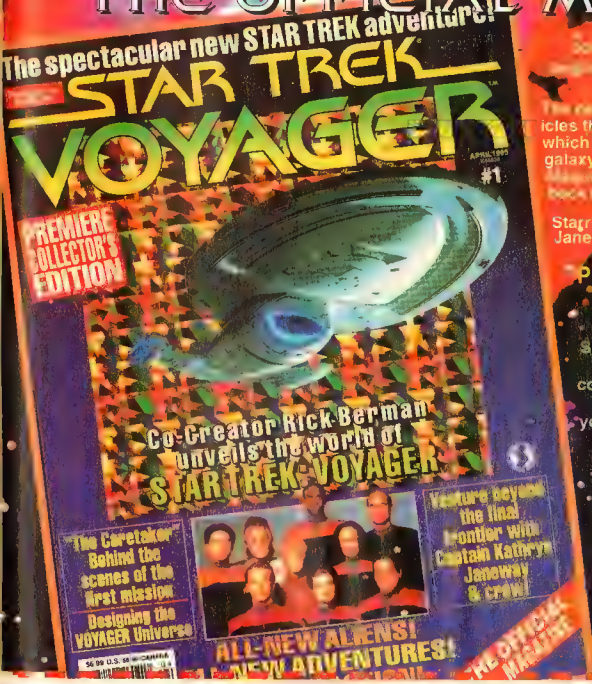
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ANIMATION SCENE

The Lion & the Swan

A New Factory for the Mouse: It was two years in the making. It cost $54 million. It's three stories tall and encompasses 243,000 square feet. It has a dialogue recording studio, sound rooms, projection rooms, many computer workstations, archives, a commissary and fitness center. And, it was built just for animators.

Photo: Copyright 1995 The Walt Disney Company

Disney's animators have a new home, the studio's Feature Animation Building (foreground).

On December 16, 1994, The Walt Disney Company opened its new Feature Animation Building near its main lot in Burbank, California.

For 10 years, the animation department was scattered among several warehouse buildings in nearby Glendale. Artists working on *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* have already moved into the new building, while the *Pocahontas* unit remains in the warehouses to finish their film. Ultimately, some 720 artists will work in one central location at 2100 Riverside Drive.

The building was designed by the renowned New York firm of Robert A. M. Stern who has designed other things for Disney—including the Yacht and Beach Club Resorts and the Casting Center in Florida, and the Newport Bay Club Hotel and Cheyenne Hotel at EuroDisney. Its most distinctive piece is a 84-foot, three-inch conical tower shaped like Mickey Mouse's wizard hat from *Fantasia*; this houses the office of Roy Disney, vice chairman of The Walt Disney Company.

The first floor contains the lobby, screening room and post-production facilities; the second floor contains animators' offices and workstations; development is done on the third floor. A basement level contains the archives and the top-secret computer equipment.

Big Bucks from the Dream Team: DreamWorks SKG, the new studio helmed by Steven Spielberg, Jeffrey Katzenberg and David Geffen, is wooing top talent from Disney Feature Animation with hefty salaries and bonuses. Considering offers

Art: Copyright 1995 Buena Vista Television

are *Aladdin* directors John Musker and Ron Clements and veteran animator Glen Keane (supervising animator for *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty & the Beast*, *Aladdin* and the upcoming *Pocahontas*). So far, Katzenberg has recruited Andreas Deja (supervising animator of Scar on *The Lion King*), Brenda Chapman (head of story, *Lion King*), Lorna Cook (story, *The Legend of Fa Mulan*), and Kathy Altieri (background supervisor, *The Lion King*). Their first animated feature may be *The Ten Commandments*.

CEO Michael Eisner was reported as saying, "The animators have done all these great movies in wretched warehouses, what if we've got a new building and get bad films?"

***Swan* Dive:** Nest Entertainment and its studio, Rich Animation, had high expectations for *The Swan Princess*. The $35 million production had mostly positive reviews, and exit polls before and during the film's release indicated that audiences loved the movie. And yet, two months after its November 18 premiere, *Swan* had earned a disappointing $9 million. By contrast, *The Lion King* on its re-release earned $34.5 million after eight weeks, while *The Pagemaster* (released November 25) earned $12 million after eight weeks. Nest and Rich are hoping that they'll recoup costs when *The Swan Princess* is released on video this June by Turner Home Video.

Theories abound as to why *The Swan Princess* didn't attract a large audience. Some people blame Disney for re-releasing *The Lion King* at the same time. (Though there's nothing wrong with competition. That's free enterprise.) Some say the movie's title, *The Swan Princess*, isn't one to attract a male crowd, and in fact, the title may change for its foreign release by Columbia TriStar Film Distributors International and Col/TriStar Home Video. Others point to the weak marketing effort by Nest and the U.S. distributor, New Line Cinema, which aimed their promotions at kiddie matinee audiences—which is exactly what they got.

Animation authority Jerry Beck offers his perspective. "First of all, you're not going to succeed by imitation. Doing more fairy tales is not what animation needs. I'm so glad we're not doing more *Care Bears* movies. We need new, different and diverse films."

With *The Swan Princess*, Beck says, "They aimed down, like Don Bluth does. They aimed it at six-year-olds, and at parents and babysitters. They didn't aim at the general population that goes to the movies.

"*The Pagemaster* had the traditional all-the-characters looking-at-us poster. They wanted to show people that the film had Macaulay Culkin and all these cartoon characters in it. You never see non-animated films that have every single character bunched into the ad looking towards us.

The #1 animated film of all time, *The Lion King* is now out on video. There are also video games, CD-ROMs and other adaptations.

"With *The Lion King*, they abandoned doing the kiddie poster," Beck says. "They now realize they have an adult audience and the kids are gonna come. That's perfect thinking. Because kids will naturally enjoy cartoons. Kids *want* to enjoy what their parents like. So *aim* it at *adults*. Also, the film itself has to deliver. When the people come, it has to be great. It has to be what the ad campaign is saying it is."

Swan's poor box-office results are a painful reminder that the animation business is just that: a business. Unable to afford to maintain its crew, Rich had to lay off most of its staff. After giving a month's notice, director Rick Rich was extremely generous in helping his artists look for work elsewhere, allowing pencil test dubbing and photocopying of drawings for portfolio purposes, writing letters of recommendation and circulating a list of recommended employees to other studios. The remaining staff will continue making direct-to-videos on *The Bible* and "Great American Heroes" (including Pocahon-

Macross & Appleseed Art: Manga Entertainment
Circle Art: Copyright 1994 Walt Disney Home Video

***Macross Plus* vaults into video stores with a four-volume OVA, English-language edition from Manga Entertainment.**

tas). Meanwhile, the studio is looking for an investor to fund its next feature project: *Feathertop*, loosely based on the classic story by Nathaniel Hawthorne, from a script by Rick Rich and Brian Nissen, about a magical scarecrow who yearns to become human.

Reign of *The Lion King*: By January 23, 1995, *The Lion King* had grossed $306.4 million after 32 weeks of release. It's now the #1 animated film of all time. The combined domestic and foreign gross was $709.1 million.

Video release data: March 3, retail price—$26.99.

In November, Disney Software and Virgin Interactive Entertainment unleashed *The Lion King* videogame on Sega Genesis and SNES. Fifteen Disney animators created 2,100 new cels of animation for the game, which includes music from the film. Simba is tested on 10 levels, training for a final confrontation with Uncle Scar. Timon and Pumbaa appear in bug-eating bonus levels.

Disney Software is offering *Disney's Animated Storybook: The Lion King* CD-ROM, Windows 107CD for $39.95 (Canada $49.95). A screensaver program called *Lion King Screen Scenes* features 40 color images, IBM format with Windows 3.5HD-71BM for $22.95 (Canada $29.95). And *Lion King Print Studio* designs stationery featuring the movie characters, IBM format with Windows 3.5HD-70BM for $22.95 (Canada $29.95).

The End of *Ren and Stimpy*: It's official. *The Ren & Stimpy Show* will cease production after 52 episodes. Nickelodeon will air the fifth and final season this fall. Strangely, the cable network doesn't consider the show "cancelled" because they'll continue to air it in reruns.

***Gargoyles* on Home Video:** "The Awakening," the five-part mini-series that began the series, has been edited into *Gargoyles, the Movie: The Heroes Awaken*, released on video in February. This tells how the Gargoyles—stone by day, alive by night—awaken from their thousand-year sleep to a strange new world. modern-day New York. How do they adjust? And, can they trust the human who awakened them?

What's interesting is that the 80-minute video excludes scenes from the mini-series—character moments and a subplot involving Gargoyle eggs. (This version was screened a week prior to the series' broadcast premiere.) Fortunately, the video lacks the obtrusive "Gargoyles" logo and station I.D. that's superimposed on the screen corner during the syndicated broadcasts.

As a bonus, the video features an interactive 20-minute VCR board game, which Disney claims to be "first of its kind." A video narrator—one of the *Gargoyles* cast—guides players through New York City to rescue the Gargoyles from the evil Xanatos. Board, character pieces, spinner and three sets of action cards are included.

The video movie/mini-series involves former *Batman: The Animated Series* talents: supervising producer Frank Paur, story editor Michael Reaves, composer Carl Johnson and inspirational layout designer Ted Blackman.

Gargoyles, the Movie retails for $19.99. A *Gargoyles* OVA (Original Video Animation) is in the works, scheduled for spring 1996.

***Gargoyles* Chases Away the Ducks:** With the expansion of *Gargoyles* to 65 episodes, the 39 episodes of *Duck Daze* have been delayed to 1996. This fall, *Gargoyles* will air four days a week, while the fifth day—Monday—will be occupied by the new *Timon & Pumbaa* series.

Originally, *Duck Daze* had a backstory. Uncle Scrooge would allow Donald Duck to inherit his fortune, *if* Donald could prove himself responsible enough to raise his own rambunctious nephews. This angle has since been jettisoned, and Scrooge will *not* appear in the show.

This fall's Disney Afternoon consists of *Goof Troop* (3 p.m. EST), *Bonkers* (3:30 p.m.) *Schnookums & Meat* (4 p.m., Mondays), *Aladdin* (4 p.m., Tuesday-Fridays) and the *Timon & Pumbaa/Gargoyles* combo (4:30 p.m.). *Darkwing Duck* leaves the schedule.

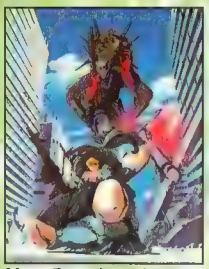
Disney's Animated Theatricial Schedule: Here's a list of animated features from Disney for the foreseeable future:

The Goofy Movie: April 7.

Pocahontas: June 23.

Toy Story: Thanksgiving 1995.

Hunchback of Notre Dame: Summer 1996.



Manga Entertainment's 1995 video release schedule includes *Appleseed*.

Hercules: 1997.

Fantasia Continued: 1998.

Oliver and Company will *not* be released theatrically this spring, as had been previously announced. A new CGI movie about the life of a dinosaur, from birth to death, is also in the works.

"Dedicated to All Pioneers": It's my pleasure to announce the release of the English-language edition of *Macross Plus*, the first of a four-volume OVA series. The Japanese continue to advance the standards in mature, hi-tech animation which American studios have yet to match

This is a "viewer-friendly" story. That is, you don't have to know what happened in previous *Macross* versions to enjoy it. This time, there are no alien invaders---and surprisingly, no real villains at all. There isn't even a *Macross*. But there *is* conflict, and plenty of *Top Gun*-esque action.

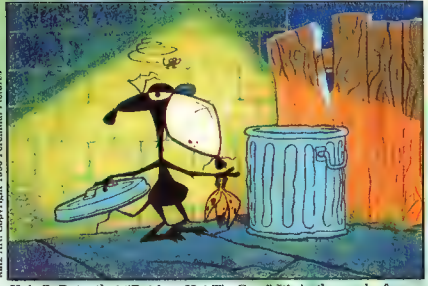
It's the year A.D. 2040. The hero is Lt. Isamu Dyson (surnamed after SF notable Freeman Dyson), a brilliant but reckless pilot patterned after Tom Cruise's "Maverick" character from *Top Gun*. Dyson is sent to the colonial planet Eden to test-fly a new transforming fighter, the VF-19, to win funding from the military. But Dyson has a competitor, Guld Goa Bowman (after the astronaut from *2001*), whose VF-21 fighter is thought controlled, and can outmaneuver high-velocity missiles (as seen in a truly dazzling aerial sequence that's animated "one ones"!). Guld also happens to be a rival over an old girl friend: Myung Fang Lone, now the manager of the galaxy's hottest singing idol, Sharon Apple. Sharon happens to be a "Virturoid," an Artificial Intelligence program with emotions, whose sensual voice enthralls the human population. Dyson and Bowman hate each other almost to the point of murder—and when was the last time you saw American cartoon heroes behave this way?

The directors and storyboard artists are Shinichiro Watanabe and Shoji Kawamori, who directed the original 1983 TV series *Super Dimensional Fortress Macross*, though the character designs are by Masayuki instead of Haruhiko Mikimoto. The crew visited Edwards Air Force Base and watched air shows to study pilot lifestyles and aerobatics. Thus, the final product reflects a high degree of realism. The music, by Yoko Kanno, is more sentimental than pop-oriented, and is performed by the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra.

Macross Plus retails at $14.95, and is 45 minutes in length. It's the flagship video to be newly released by Manga Entertainment, Inc., a new distributor in the home video sell-through market specializing in cutting-edge *anime*. Its sister company in the U.K., Manga Entertainment Limited, was formed in 1991. Each Manga video has been in the Top 20 in England's video charts. Manga's U.S. division was formed in July 1994, with headquarters in Chicago and production offices in Los Angeles. Last year, Manga acquired LA Hero, the LA-based distribution arm of Tokyo's Hero Co. Ltd.; LA Hero had previously dubbed *Orguss* and the *Macross II* OVA series in conjunction with U.S. Renditions.

The dates are subject to change, but Manga's 1995 release schedule is:

February: *Macross Plus*, Vol. 1; *Appleseed*.



Ratz Art: Copyright 1995 Perennial Pictures

He's O. Ratz, that "Rat in a Hot Tin Can." It's in the works from Perennial Pictures.

March: *Orguss 02*, Vol. 1; *Black Magic M-66*.

April: *Dominion II*, Vol. 1; *Giant Robo*, Vol. 1.

May: *Macross Plus*, Vol. 2; *Devilman* #1, *Devilman* #2.

June: *Giant Robo*, Vol. 2; *Wings of Honneamise*.

July: *Dominion II*, Vol. 2; *Patlabor I, the Movie*.

August: *Macross Plus*, Vol. 3; *Giant Robo*, Vol. 3.

September: *Dominion II*, Vol. 3.

October: *Macross Plus*, Vol. 4; *Giant Robo*, Vol. 4.

November: *Macross II CD-ROM*; *Macross II, the Movie*.

Late 1995: Katsuhiro Otomo's *Memories*.

Meanwhile, a new 35-episode TV series, *Macross Seven*, premiered in Japan last October. It continues the adventures of Captain Maximillian Janus (*Robotech*'s Max Sterling), his Meltiaedi wife Milia and daughter Milene. A spokesman for Manga says they will not be importing the new series.

Don Bluth's Latest Flop: *A Troll in Central Park*, which was to be released theatrically last August, finally unspooled in a handful of theaters in October—for only one day. Executives at Warner Bros., the film's distributors, had considered *Troll* to be "unreleasable," but gave the film a limited release in order to fulfill its contract, and to give it some public recognition for its January video debut.

Mr. Bumpy's Video Boogie: In late February, ABC Video released *Mr. Bumpy's Karaoke Cafe*, featuring 10 karaoke segments from the stop-motion animated series, *Bump in the Night*. Jim Cummings voices the star: Mr. Bumpy, a green, purple-warted, fun-loving monster who lives under the bed of a 10-year-old boy. Bumpy's pals include the blue toilet-dwelling Squishington (Rob Paulsen) and comfort doll Molly Coddle (Gail Matthius). The characters first appeared in the interstitial announcements ("We'll Be Right Back" and "Back to the Show") during ABC Saturday morning last season.

Cummings recorded new introductions for the video, which retails for $12.95. Meanwhile, ABC has committed to at least two years of the series (52 episodes, containing 11-minute, 7-minute and 3-minute segments per half-hour), which is produced by Ken Pontac and David Bleiman of Danger Productions (line producer and art director respectively of Lorimar's *The New Adventures of Gumby*, currently airing on Nickelodeon). Co-producer and story editor Mark Zaslove developed and story-edited *TaleSpin*, *Cro*, *Mighty Max*, and writes *Superhuman Samurai Sybersquad* with partner Jymn Magon.

Bump Art: Copyright 1995 Greengos Productions

Academy Award Cartoons will be celebrated on the Cartoon Network in March. Nominees will air March 20 from 9 to 11 p.m. EST and March 25 from noon to 2 p.m.

Also, a selection from the 50 greatest cartoons will air March 22 from 9 to 11 p.m. EST and March 26 from noon to 2 p.m. This is based on the book by Beck, *The 50 Greatest Cartoons*, as surveyed by 1,000 animation professionals including two CS contributors, Jami Bernard and myself.

Batman on CD-ROM: Coming at Christmas 1996, a new, 20-minute episode of *Batman: The Animated Adventures* will be released on CD-ROM for Sega Systems. In "Mystery 86," Batman has to rescue Robin and Commissioner Gordon from the Joker, Harley Quinn, Poison Ivy, the Riddler and Rupert Thorne. The episode, previewed at New York's Toy Fair in February, is produced by Bruce Timm, Paul Dini and Alan Burnett, written by Dini, and directed by Kevin Altieri and Dan Riba.

D'oh! I need to correct some boo-boos from the last column. The original *Eighth Man* aired in the U.S. in 1965, and Sachiko Yokugawa was his *secretary*, not his wife. Jerry Beck and Will Friedwald wrote *Looney Tunes and Merry Melodies*. D'oh!

Goofy Unleashed: It's the second feature film from Disney's TV Animation Division: *The Goofy Movie*, starring the characters from *Goof Troop*. The story comes from *TaleSpin* co-creator Jymn Magon, with screenplay by Magon, Chris Matheson and Brian Pimental. It's directed by Kevin Lima, produced by Dan Rounds, with music by composer Tom Snow and performances by musician Tevin Campbell.

As with *DuckTales: The Movie*, the animation was done in France. This unit transferred from TV to the Feature Animation division last October 4. They're currently working on *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Meanwhile, Disney TV animation plans to open a feature studio in Vancouver.

Although *Goofy* (once subtitled "Man 2 Man") was originally scheduled to be released last November to compete against *Swan Princess* and *Pagemaster*, production problems in the French unit caused delays. Disney Feature animators in Glendale had to help out with several scenes. In the film, Goofy "stretches" as an actor as he tries to bond with his teenage son Max. Will kids who want to watch Goofy care about the teen-angst storyline? Will teens who relate to teen-angst go to a movie about Goofy? We'll find out when it premieres April 7.

The Cartoon Network Gets Perennial: One of the new Hanna-Barbera/Cartoon Network shorts will come from Indianapolis-based Perennial Pictures Film Corporation. Producer/director Jerry Reynolds and partner Russ Harris founded the studio in 1979, which has produced commercials, vignettes and 13 half-hour animated holiday specials for TV and video, such as *A Merry Mirthworm Christmas* and *The Three Fishketeers*. Reynolds' seven-minute short is "Rat in a Hot Tin Can," starring O. Ratz (Harvey Korman, "The Great Gazoo"), a skid row rat who wants to wants to survive long enough to attain the good life. His sidekick is Dave D. Fly (Marvin Kaplan), who tries to keep them both out of trouble and to curb O. Ratz's plots. Nancy Dussault rounds out the cast. The network has the option for two more O. Ratz cartoons. If public response is favorable, the characters may get their own series.

More "World Premiere Toons": The first of 48 new shorts by Hanna-Barbera premiered February 26 on the Cartoon Network. Every week thereafter, a new short plays before a feature-length animated film, starting at 7 p.m. EST. This is known as "Mr. Spim's Cartoon Theatre."

Here's the schedule for the first batch of shorts:

February 26: "Dexter's Laboratory."

March 5: Yuckie Duck in "Short Orders."

March 12: The Powerpuff Girls in "Meat Fuzzy Lumkins."

March 19: Dino in "Stay Out!"

March 26: "Johnny Bravo."

April 2: Sledgehammer O'Possum in "Out and About."

April 9: George and Junior in "Look Out Below."

April 16: "Hardluck Duck."

These shorts will repeat until May or June, when the next batch of shorts are completed. "Mr. Spim's Cartoon Theatre" will ask viewers for their opinions of the "World Premiere Toons" via letters and America Online.

Which, if any, of these new cartoon characters will join the ranks of Yogi Bear, Bugs Bunny and Scooby Doo? That is something *you* will be deciding. Their fate is in your hands. And the Cartoon Network wants to hear from you.

—*Bob Miller*

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Autographed by Fabian Nicieza. Limited Edition of 2,500.

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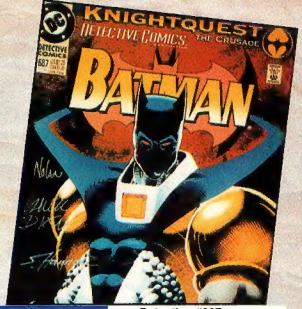

SET #4: $80

Batman #497
Autographed by Jim Aparo, Doug Moench, Dick Giordano & Kelley Jones. This is the back breaking issue in the Knightfall saga. Limited Edition of 9,000.

Detective #667
Autographed by Chuck Dixon, Graham Nolan & Scott Hanna. First in the Knightfall series. Limited Edition of 5,000.

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Man of Steel #30
Autographed by Jon Bogdanove & Dennis Janke. The first color-form cover ever done.

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Autographed by Sergio Aragones. The first pop up comic cover ever done.

Protectors #5
Autographed by RA Jones and Tom Derenick. The first force beam hole ever done.

SET #5: $40

Death of Superman Poster Kit
Two posters commemorating the death of Superman, earth's greatest hero. Each is autographed by Dan Jurgens, artist & writer. One poster depicts the funeral with many of the characters in the DC Universe. The other poster is a reproduction of Death of Superman, in issue #75 cover. Each poster is a Limited Edition of 5,000.

SET #3: $60

Batman #500
Autographed by Jim Aparo, Terry Austin & Doug Moench. The first appearance of the new Azrael. Limited Edition of 9,500.

Shadow of the Bat #16
Autographed by Mike Manley. Both Knightfall issues are 1st prints. Limited Edition of 5,000.

SET #6: $40

Legacy of Superman #1
Autographed by Curt Swan & Dan Jurgens. Issued in 3/93. Limited Edition of 5,000.

Superman #1
(2nd Series)
Autographed by Terry Austin. Issued in 1986. Superman battles a Cyborg villain with a Kryptonite heart. The old Luthor makes an appearance. Limited Edition of 2,500.

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COMICS REPORTER

The on-again/off-again *Vampirella* film is in the works once more.

Casper. Film. Am/U. D: Brad Silberling. Summer.

Catwoman. Film. WB. S: Dan Waters.

❑ **Cisco Kid.** TV movie sequel. W/Jimmy Smits, Cheech Marin. D: Luis Valdez. S: David Taylor. TNT.

Crying Freeman. Film. D: C. Gans. W/M. Dacascos, Rae Dawn Chong.

Daredevil. Film. Fox. D: Carlo Carlei. S: Carlei, Chris Columbus. P: Ben Myron, Tony Ludwig, Alan Riche.

❑ **Dennis the Menace.** Sequel. S: Jeff Schechter.

Dr. Strange. Film. S: David S. Goyer. Col.

❑ **Donkey Kong Country.** AN series. Nel.

Doom's IV. Film. P/S: Rob Liefeld. Am.

Dudley Do-Right. Film. U.

Dungeons & Dragons. Film. Sweetpea Ent. S: Topper Lilien & Carroll Cartwright.

Elektra Assassin. Film.

Fantastic Four. Film. D: Chris Columbus.

Elfquest. AN film. P: Ed Pressman.

Faust. Film. D: Stuart Gordon. S: David Quinn.

Felix the Cat. AN. FR.

Fist of the North Star. Film. D: Tony Randel. W/Gary Daniels, Costas Mandylor.

❑ **Flash Gordon.** Film. S: David S. Goyer. P: Peter Guber.

Freakazoid. AN series. WB/Am. P: Bruce Timm, Paul Dini.

Ghost Rider. Film. S: David S. Goyer. Savoy.

Gothik. Film. P: Jeff Most.

Green Hornet. Film. U.

Grimjack. Film.

Hate. AN Film. S: Peter Bagge. Colossal Pictures.

❑ **Hopalong Cassidy.** Film. S: John Milius.

❑ **Incredible Hulk.** Film. U. P: Gale Anne Hurd. S: John Turman.

Inspector Gadget. Film. S: J. Loeb III, M. Weisman. U.

Jonny Quest. AN & LA films. S: Fred Dekker. New AN series.

Judge Dredd. Film. W/Sylvester Stallone. D: Danny Cannon.

Kull. Film. U. S: C. Pogue.

Lt. Blueberry. Film. P: Eclectic Films.

Little Lulu. AN. Lulu: Tracey Ullman.

Luke Cage. Film. S: Ron Friedman.

Machine. Film. P: Larry Gordon. DH. U.

The Mask. AN series. FR. CBS.

The Men in Black. Film. Col/Am.

Mickey Mouse. New AN theatrical shorts. WD.

❑ **Mighty Morphin Power Rangers.** Film. D: Bryan Spicer. Summer release.

Mr. Magoo. Film. Am/WB.

Modesty Blaise. Film. Miramax. P: Marcelo Anciano, Michael Berrow.

❑ **Mortal Kombat.** Film. P: Larry Kasanoff. D: Paul Anderson. Summer debut.

NeverEnding Story. AN. Nel.

Nexus. AN film. HB.

Peanuts. Film. P/S: John Hughes. WB.

The Phantom. Film. PP.

❑ **Pinky & the Brain.** New AN series. WB/Am. WB Kids' Network.

Pit Bulls. Film. P: Larry Gordon. DH. U.

Plastic Man. Film. WB/Am.

Pocahontas. AN film. WD. June release.

Prince Valiant. Film. S: M. Beckner, Roger Kumble, Marlene King. N. Constantin.

❑ **The Rocky Horror Show.** AN series. Nel.

The Saint. Film. PP.

Sandman. Film. S: Ted Elliott, Terry Rossio. P: Oren Koules, Alan Riche.

❑ **Sand Sharks.** AN series. DIC.

Sgt. Rock. Film. P: Joel Silver. S/D: John Milius. WB.

Sheena. TV series. Col.

Sin City. S: Frank Miller.

Silver Surfer. Film. S: John Turman. Neue Constantin.

Speed Racer. Film. S: J.J. Abrams. WB.

Spider-Man. LA film.

The Spirit. LA & AN projects. P: Michael Uslan, Ben Melnicker.

Spy vs. Spy. Film. S: Gene Quintano. P: Steven Tisch, QDE.

Stretch Armstrong. Film. D: William Dear. S: Mike Werb, Michael Colleary.

❑ **Tank Girl.** Film. (see article)

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles IV. Film. New Line.

Terry & the Pirates. TV. Syn. Fall 1995.

❑ **Vampirella.** Film.

V for Vendetta. Film. S: Hilary Henkin. D: Brett Leonard. P: Joel Silver.

Virus. Film. DH. S: Chuck Pfarrer. P: Gale Anne Hurd. U.

X. Film. DH. U.

X-Men. Film. Fox. P: Lauren Shuler-Donner. S: Andrew Kevin Walker.

Yummy Fur. Film. D: Bruce McDonald. Yorktown Prods.

Zen Intergalactic Ninja. Film. D: Brian Yuzna.

Zorro. Film. D: Mikael Salomon. TriStar. S: Terry Rossio, Ted Elliott.

Look for an animated—although not so undraped—*Rocky Horror Picture Show* from Nelvana.

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COMICS Screen

Art: Joe Chiodo/Harris Publications/Courtesy Topps

All of these projects are live-action unless specified. Those boxed are new or updated since last listing. **Not everything listed will ultimately ever be made.** S: script; D: director; P: producer; EP: executive producer; C: creator; AN: animated; LA: live-action; Syn: syndicated; HB: Hanna-Barbera; Nel: Nelvana; WD: Disney; WB: Warner Bros.; PP: Paramount; U: Universal; Col: Columbia; Am: Amblin; DH: Dark Horse; FR: Film Roman; QDE: Quincy Davis Entertainment. **Attn. all pros:** Info to be added to this list is cheerfully invited. Send to COMICS SCENE, 475 Park Ave. South, 8th Flr., NY, NY 10016. (Info as of 2/15/95)

Accident Man. Film. S: Pat Mills, Tony Skinner.

❑ **Aeon Flux.** MTV. AN half-hour. 10 episodes.

The Airtight Garage. AN. EP: Kurosawa Ent. P: Philippe Rivier. D: Moebius, Katsuhiro Otomo. S: Randy Lofficier.

❑ **Animaniacs.** Moves to WB Kids' Network this fall.

Annie & the Tomorrow Team. AN. TV project. Fremantle.

Archie. Film. DIC.

The Badger. Film/TV. PP.

Barbarella. Film. Nel.

❑ **Barb Wire.** Film. V/DH. Possibly w/Pam Anderson.

❑ **Batman Forever.** Sequel. W/Val Kilmer. D: Joel Schumacher. Summer.

❑ **Beavis and Butt-head.** AN film. Geffen Films. S: Mike Judge.

Betty Boop. AN film. S: Jerry Rees. EP: R. Fleischer, R. Zanuck.

Biker Mice from Mars. Film. P: Al Ruddy, Andre Morgan, David Chan. S: Greg Johnson.

Blade. S: David S. Goyer. D: Ernest Dickerson.

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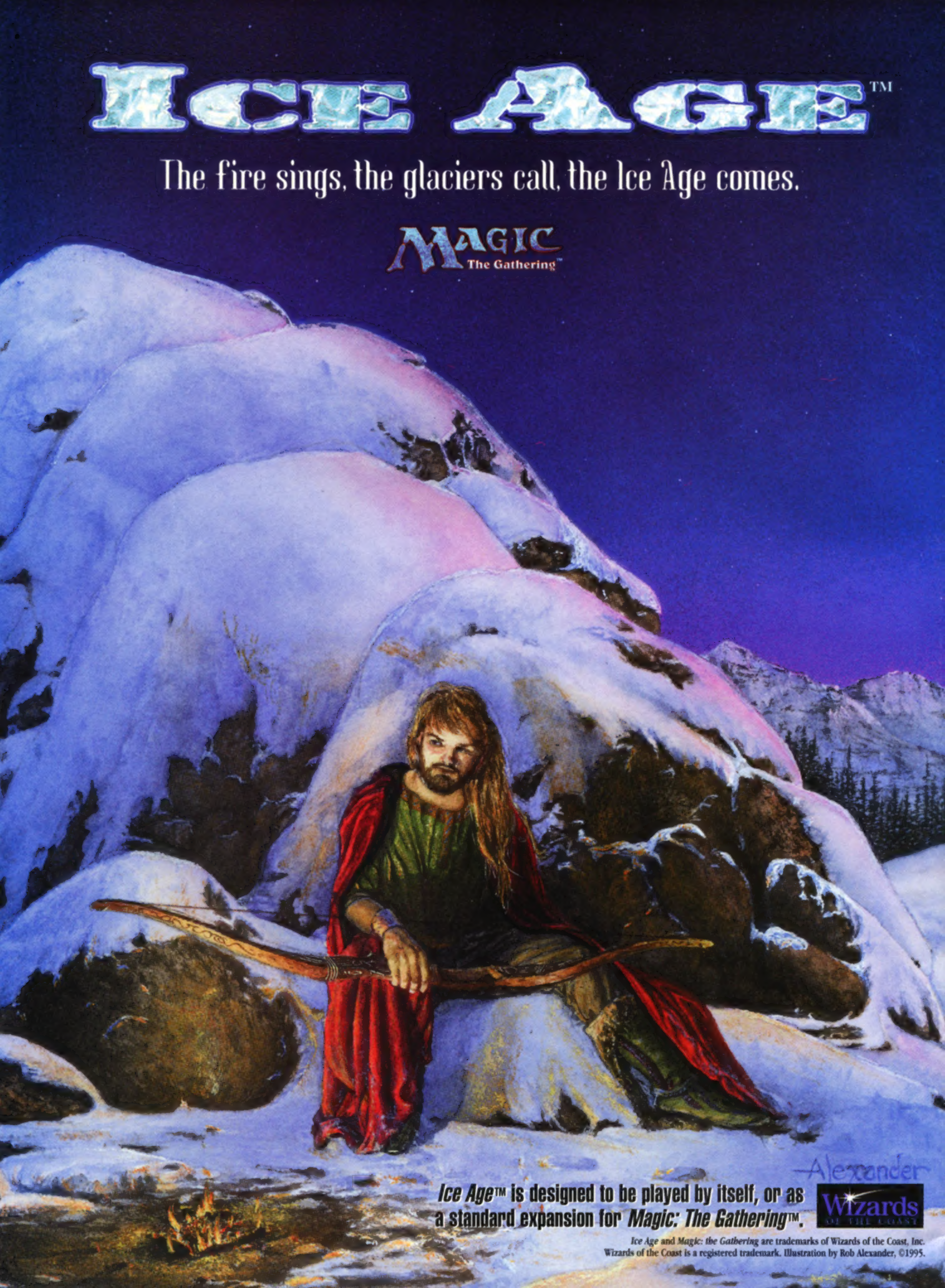

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